DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 720 IR 008 635

AUTHOR Harvey, Lisa St. Clair
TITLE Reality Presentation and Communication: A Comparative Discussion of the Smithsonian Institution and The Washington Post as Communications Structures.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 99p.: Best copy available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer): Community Influence: Comparative Analysis: Information Dissemination: *Information Processing: Interviews: Mass Media: Media Research: *Museums: *News Media: Social Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS Gatekeeper Role: *Smithsonian Institution: Washington Post

ABSTRACT

A comparative study of two types of media, a newspaper and a museum, reveals substantive differences in the ways each of these communications organizations alters the information which it presents to the public. Interviews conducted with spokespeople from the Washington Post and the Smithsonian Institution focused on three major theories of communication which account for ways in which reality is transformed by the media: (1) the gatekeeping theory, which says that as witnesses, reporters, editors, etc., each leave their own mark on the initial news item, it is changed: (2) the community interaction theory, which says that the audience sometimes has the power to determine what form its media may assume: and (3) the social responsibility theory, which says that since the press enjoys a privileged position under the government, it has certain obligations in presenting the news. References and a 46-item bibliography are attached. (LIS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED192720

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

IR

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REALITY PRESENTATION AND COMMUNICATION:

A Comparative Discussion of the Smithsonian Institution and The Washington Post as Communications Structures.

Lisa St. Clair Harvey
McGill University
1979.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lisa St.Clair Harvey

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR008635

ABSTRACT

A review of the gatekeeping, social responsibility, and community interaction theories of media and communications is presented, and the relationship between communication and education is discussed. Comparisons are made between the newspaper and the museum as generic renditions of communicational organizations, with The Washington Post and the Smithsonian Institution serving as examples of the two different educational structures. Interviews with the professional staff of both the Post and the Smithsonian are included. The differences and the similiarities of these two divergent forms of communication organizations are illustrated, and suggestions are made regarding the ideological needs and the realistic operative principles of communicative structures in general. An extensive bibliography is appended.

PREFACE

If the Smithsonian Institution communicates about the past, then it must be more or less like other communicational institutions, and thus must experience all of the same structural complexities and societal involvements that media institutions inevitably fall into.

On this premise I designed my thesis, investigationg not only the specifics of the Smithsonian's inherent "media identity", but also comparing the museum complex to a more traditional "media organization" - namely, The Washington Post newspaper. By operating on the assumption that all types of communications networks[1] were fundamentally similar - and particularly were similar in their problems - I outlined and undertook a comparative investigation of these two mammoth and diverse entities.

My study revolved around the issues and the principles which I had absorbed during my university study - the social responsibility and gatekeeping theories, and the socio-cultural contextual interface between a communicator and an audience. From the very beginning it was an exciting undertaking, particularly in light of the fact that, as far as I knew, no one had ever before thought to consider a museum complex in terms of media/communications theory. If it could be successfully done, it would open up an entirely new lode of communications-studies information.

I researched. The bibliography to this paper is exhaustive-- that is because I read exhaustively. Still, I couldn't find what I needed in the academic sources which I researched, so during the Christmas holidays I availed myself of the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., and conduct a series of interviews with both the Post and the Smithsonian.

As a result, I got what I needed, but not necessarily what I wanted. Most of my theoretical premises-- based on sheerly academic research-- either had to be twisted around outrageously to fit the actual situation, or had to be discarded entirely. My original assumption, that there were underlying similarities between the Post and the Smithsonian Institution, by reason of their both being communications organizations-- was particularly fallacious. There were some similarities, and those similarities were interesting enough, but what turned out to be of even more informational value were the unexpected differences.

As a result of all this, a paper I had originally intended to be academically conclusive has, instead, ended up being theoretically discursive. All my statements, theories, and conclusions about "media reality" have "hit the dust"-- the scholastic grounding just didn't hold up well enough under the more realistic[2] research. This is not at all to say that academic research is useless and misleading; for one thing, I would not have been able to postulate a method of investigation in the first place, had I not been able to draw upon the great accumulation of thought that has already been amassed in com-

munications study. Rather, it is to say that the theoretical and the practical must be capable of working in tandem - the theoretical must allow for the realities of the practical, and the practical must admit to the possibilities put forth by the theoretical. The two have a lot to offer each other.

To repeat, this paper is not a conclusive statement; it couldn't be, and still reconcile honestly the dichotomies which were revealed between my ideas and "their" facts. Instead, what I hope I have done is to bring into a more precise focus the kinds of issues that are operationally crucial in communications organizations. Then again, by referring to the ways in which other thinkers have considered the same problems, it seems I actually have reached a few conclusions along the way.

INTRODUCTION

Organizationally, this paper is divided into three sections, each of which is almost a separate paper in itself.

What I am trying to do is to highlight two different sets of differences. Both the Smithsonian and the Post present information -- present facts, if you will --to the public, and in the presentation of that information, they cannot help but alter it.

According to the accepted notions concerning media institutions, the same sort of alteration should take place within the two organizations. But it does not. The Post alters reality in a different manner than does the Smithsonian, and it alters that reality for different reasons. What I want to attend to within the structure of this paper is 1) this difference in alteration of reality, and 2) the reasons behind these alterations, because an examination of those reasons then brings into light some of the differences between the academic idea of media institutions, and the functional realities of those same institutions.

PART I: The Washington Post

The Image

Metropolitan News is a magazine and newspaper store on Peel Street, in Montreal, that caters to college students, New York Times addicts, and the city's current-events intelligentsia. Tacked up just outside the door is a piece of white cardboard, a refugee from somebody's drycleaners, with crooked black letters scribbled across it. This unimposing notice is perhaps one of the most brilliant bits of salesmanship I have ever encountered. It says, very simply:

> 97% of the people who run the United States read The Washington Post.

The Post, of course, takes issue with that. They say it is 99%.

What exactly is The Washington Post, and why does it have such an impact? What is the nature of that impact, and why is it so directly translatable into selling power? If it is directly translatable into selling power, might it not also be translatable-- both directly and indirectly-- into other sorts of things?

The Post is, before all things, a newspaper. What is a newspaper?-- it is a communications event, a method of information dispersal which synthesizes the economic principle of mass production with the cultural tool of the written word. It gathers action in, and it feeds "fact" out; it collects

current events, and it distributes ultra-modern history into the lap of numerous breakfast-table readers. It tells us what has happened in our world today, and by doing so it defines for us our own parameters of interest and involvement in that world, as well as affecting what will happen in that world tomorrow. We cannot react to things we do not know exist, and the daily, "objective" reportage of our local newspaper tells us implicitly not only what does and does not exist, but also the order of importance in which it ought to exist for each of us, personally. A newspaper is an incredibly, and deceptively, powerful phenomenon.

Because it is so powerful, newspapers and newspapermen are not very well liked by anybody but themselves. Politicians are not the only people who might cherish the thought of "gifting" China with 40,000 of our journalists.[3] Harold Innis said of newspapers that "they promote the very factors which occasion them - mechanization, mass production, and commercialism."[4] Clearly, by Innis' lights, none of these three are desirable elements in a society already constricted by itself to the point of immobility.[5] And William Rivers, in his fascinating work on the "interplay of politics and the press",[6], is only echoing the sentiments expressed by Marshall McLuhan when he entitled his [Rivers'] book, The Opinion Makers.

McLuhan's fear, it seems, is not merely confined to the pejorative presentations that a newspaper may or may not pass off as "objective reporting", but is instead centred around

the role a newspaper may take on within the operational framework of society. He speaks of the "control feature"[7] of mass media, and goes on to discuss how media-perpetrated opinion has supplanted the personal method of inductive reasoning that men used to reach their decisions by. According to both Innis and McLuhan, human beings no longer talk; they exchange personally stylized versions of the day's tabloid, or news broadcast.

There are, of course, numerous criticisms of the proponents of this position. As Geoffry Wagner points out, McLuhan has a tendency to change his tune depending on his dance at the moment.[8] Also, one thought that I myself have on the subject is that all of this outpour of rage over the newspaper's (as an example of mass media's) attempt to do our creative, responsible thinking for us is dependent on the assumption that, previously, we did it for ourselves. Considering the power that public opinion has always possessed, no matter what the medium by which it is spread, the question of just what most effectively sways the public appears entirely valid. Still, McLuhan is, at least, not alone in some of his criticism:

> Once one sees a newspaper as a business, oriented to serving the advertising and other brainwashing needs of the rest of capitalistic business, the door to understanding journalism is open.[9]

Nor is he alone in his view of the media, the press included, as being dangerously powerful:

> ... the mass media are in the business of manufacturing and reproducing images. They provide the guiding myths which shape our conception of the world and serve as important instruments of social control.[10]

Whether it is seen as a social element, or whether it is seen as an influencing voice, a newspaper seems to be seen in a rather poor light. Still, the opposition is not as simple as "intellectual vs commercial"; media is seen as something to be wary of, but also as something with enormous potential. The situation is summed up:

> Norbert Wiener once said that to live effectively is to live with adequate information. But if an adequate input of information is essential to each of us, then so is an adequate outgo from each of us. Journalism by nature consists principly of broadcasting information and interpretation to the mass, whether through print, electronics, or other means. But it serves best if it also makes the governors - economic and moral governors as well as political governors - aware of what the governed think and feel.
>
> Therefore journalism, the press, media - whatever you call the mechanics of our communications - should perform both tasks. Our journalism does so. It is sometimes superb, sometimes dreadful, and mostly in between.[11]

Further, the fundamental <u>need</u> for a "press" is acknowledged:

> It (the press) is, in a democratic society, the intelligence apparatus of those in whom ultimate authority is supposed to reside - the people. The institution... of the free press is, next to the electoral process, the single most important instrument for maintaining that authority and, indeed, is prerequisite even to a healthy electoral process. It is the central nervous system of democracy.[12]

Hillier extends the argument to an even more vehement point:

> Among its various roles as an essential social institution, the press has the centuries-old assignment to serve as watchdog of government. In fact, until the twentieth century, that seemed to be its most important task. But now, in addition to the job of exposing what officials are doing, both well and badly, newsmen have to keep their audiences abreast of the world's happenings, so that they have the information they need not only for decision-making in a democratic society but sometimes for everyday living, as well as for sheer enjoyment and fun.[13]

Unfortunately, the very nature of the need for the press also creates the problems of that institution. The press is supposed to be "independent", the better to serve as an impartial "watchdog" on both government and "big business"-- yet, journalism is a business, and precisely because it is "independent" (i.e., not funded) it must needs be successful business, which often boils down to being "big business" itself.

Herbert Brucker gives the journalists' point of view:

> ... difficulty lies also in the economic system that journalism shares with the rest of the private sector of our economy. Like other businesses that get the world's work done, journalism must be a profit-making enterprise. But unlike all the others, it performs a public service without which self-government cannot exist. That puts upon it obligations other businesses do not share.[14]

Expecting a private enterprise to perform a public service is, in the vernacular, "shaky at best". Yet, that is precisely what we-- the public-- seem to demand of our journalistic system. The expectation does not rest at the level of exclusively political information, either. As Brucker

mentions, we desire our newspapers to give us reviews, cultural opinions, recipes, mysticism (astrology columns), even advice for our love lives! All this, we assume is the newspaper's inherent function to provide for us, and yet at the same time that we are demanding so much from it, we are also criticizing the newspaper for the influence which it assumes in our lives.

This is not a defense of the overworked, underloved newspaper. It serves merely to point out the intrinsic paradox of mass communication, as so dramatically illustrated by the plight of the press. The questions, the problems that we are dealing with when we deal with the role and the function of the press are not only numerous, but they are also profound.

One of the best possible "living examples" of this situation is the case of The Washington Post. It has all of the troubles, all of the complexities that any newspaper has - and then some; it has the added complication, in the interaction of the media and the community, of dealing with the United States' capital city as its community. The Washington Post cannot help but be in a very powerful, but a very tricky, position.

Power is a household word in the Washington area, and influence is a matter that strikes close to the community heart. The average length of time a family lives in the District of Columbia is three years; most of the people who are there are there because the head of the family is somehow in-

volved in a power shift-- anything from the election of a new man to the Presidency to an IBM executive, putting in a lateral promotion. As a result of these personal motivations, the overall community is very much like an over-excited nerve ganglion, ready to react to any stimulus in an almost exaggerated manner.

This creates a very special tension for the area newspaper: it must bear in mind not only what it says-- as do all newspapers-- but, to an excrutiating extent, to whom they are saying it. Also, the decision whether or not to cover a bit fo "local" news can never truly be that simple for The Washington Post; what is "local" for Washington is "national" for the United States. And, what is national for the United States has a very good chance of being global in its ultimate effects.

Also, the Post has undergone something which has forever altered the way in which the public will view the paper, and that is Watergate. Watergate, besides being many other things, was the ultimate test case of the press taking initiative in an action of social responsibility. It was also a decisive statement on the full extent of the power of the press not as just an abstract concept, but as something real, something to be dealt with. Watergate was American investigative reporting's coming-of-age.

But the role of The Washington Post in the Watergate drama also had social and ethical ramifications. Through the

exercise of freedom of the press, an American president was forced out of office. This was a momentous event even in a historical sense. Even more remarkable were the social changes which occurred as a result of the political action. The American theory of "good guys do best; therefore all guys doing well must be good" was totally shattered; the last vestige of belief in the Protestant work ethic vanished. In its place grew a deep political cynicism, an edgy awareness that no one -- particularly in politics, but in other fields as well-- remained pure. The political implications of Watergate were apparent; the journalistic implications a little bit less self-evident. The social implications were veiled and tremendous ... if you couldn't trust the President, then who could you trust? Watergate, through the display instrument of journalism, taught the American people that you couldn't trust the President.

Perhaps the last time that a single newspaper had such a direct effect on immediate history occurred during the Civil War, when William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, The Liberator, pulled most of the Yankee populace over to the side of abolition.

It is remarkable that a branch of private business could have such direct effect on the machines of state, yet this appears to be the case. This is an incredible power to wield, and yet it can have its disadvantages. For one, The Washington Post will never again be able to convince anyone that it

is primarily a local paper.

This may seem like a nice problem to have, but it is not necessarily so. The greatest portion of the Post's readership is, in fact, local, yet those readers will never truly believe that the paper they read is truly intended for them. Further, any information that the Post can gather will be given out to them on the assumption that it is slated, sooner or later, for national exposure. If you were a Senator from Massachusetts, might this not affect your behavior during a Post interview? Watergate did a lot for the Post; it also did a lot to it.

Bearing this in mind, let us turn directly to the story of The Washington Post.

The Questions

Successful interviewing often seems to boil down to the ability to get people to tell you more about themselves than they originally intended to. With this in mind, I worked up both an "overt" and a "covert"[15] agenda for my Post interview.

My initial intention was to investigate the effect the paper had on the socio-cultural life of the area. To this end, I tried to arrange a meeting with Weekend Magazine, the high-profile cultural/recreational supplement to the more news-oriented Post. However, Weekend was having none of it; instead I was forced to meet with a public relations representative.

This was a great disappointment to me, as it seemed like the most I would be likely to glean from Public Relations would be just that-- Public Relations. However, some interesting points came up notwithstanding the obviously prepared delivery of the interview.

I had gone into the session prepared to examine the power which the media exerted over the community. Most of the data I received involved quite the reverse-- the power which the community exerted over the media. My ultimate question was: how do the different forms of the media appear similar or dissimilar in their alteration of reality? The data which I received from the Post interview forced me to re-work the question itself.

Here is my "overt agenda" for the Post interview; with the corresponding "covert agenda" after each question:

1.) What role, what function, does the Post feel that it fulfills in the community?
(This question was designed to investigate the degree of influence that the Post wields within the community.)

2.) What is important as news in the nation's capitol is important as news in the nation. As a newspaper, how aware of this relationship is the Post? As a speaking voice of sorts (as a form of media) how does the prominence of the city affect the editorial content, and the overall tone, of the paper?
(In this question, I was testing the notion that if the paper has great power in the community; and the community has great power in the nation, then the paper then has great power in the nation.)

3.) What role does the Post see itself playing in the development of Washington's cultural scene?
(I was trying to see if the Post, simply by giving space to some events (genres of cultural expression) actually had a hand in what develops as the cultural character of the area.)

4.) What is the relationship between the Post as a news information media, and its Weekend Magazine? Are the same editors and the same staff involved in both productions? How much of an active interest in the Weekend Magazine does the newspaper take? Are the sources of advertising revenue the same? Do the same people who make the decisions about what goes into the Post decide what goes into Weekend?
(In this question I wanted to investigate the degree of autonomy of Weekend Magazine. The reason for this was to explore the power relationship between the political orientation of the Post and the cultural orientation.

5.) Does Weekend actively seek free-lance articles, or are they mostly staff-written?
(This question was intended to establish the ratio of free-lance contributors to staff writers, in order to help determine just how much Weekend was actually an organ of the community.)

6.) Could you describe the circulation, the type of reader, that the Post is trying to reach? Is it, in your opinion, the Post or Weekend that reaches them? Which has more direct effect on their lives?

7.) How does the Post think of itself in comparison to, say, the New York Times? Is it (the Post) more liberal, more modern? Is the Post beginning to compete for the same "elite"

kind of readership?

8.) What are the feelings of the Post towards the notions of: 1) social responsibility, and

2) national security, in terms of information leakage?

9.) I've noticed a certain similarity in form - layout, style of photography, etc., - between the Post's Weekend Magazine and the New York Times Magazine. Is this deliberate? Are the Post and the Times in competition?

(Questions 6 - 9 were intended as a jamming device, to get the interviewee talking about the interaction between the Post and its readers in an abstract sense. I thought that by bringing in the comparitive element (i.e., the New York Times), I could get the Post to give more interesting viewpoints on itself, by means of opposition, ("Well no, we're not like the Times, we're like this...", etc.)

10.) How long has the Weekend Magazine, in its present form, been a regular supplement to the Post? Do you consider the magazine a success?
(The important part of this question is the second part; I hoped to get the Post to tell me what their idea of "success" was.)

11.) In the eyes of the Washington Post, when all is said and done, what is a newspaper supposed to be?

12.) In the eyes of Weekend Magazine, what is its own function, service, and importance?
(Questions 11 and 12 were intended to enable me to compare an actual newspaper's idea of what a paper is, and does, with what everyone else says a newspaper is and does.)

Following is the transcript of my interview with the Washington Post.

Transcript
Washington Post interview: Virigia Rodreigus
December 20, 1978.
Washington, D.C.

P--"Post"
I--"Interviewer"

P: "What function does the Post feel it fufills in the community?" Well, I would hope that, well, uh,we try to inform the community, basically.that's what a newspaper is all about, and you do that as objectively and as accurately as possible.Uh,as a business, separate from the newspaper, in what the daily product is every day, I think that the Post tries very very hard to be involved with the community. You know, as much as we can. And by that I mean, um, lending some of our staff expertise to schools and um, by contibuting finacially to, uh, needy orgabizations . I mean, you know, we probably one of the largest employers in the District. Other than--forget the government. We have a school service program that goes out to all the junior high schools in the area at no charge and it's used in conjunction with social studies classes. The program right now is sort of in limbo. When it first started back in '69 we were,we took a thematic approach--all of this stuff is recycled out of the paper. We prepared monthly sort of booklets that went out to all these kids,uh,on a theme, like discrimination, changing role of women, drug abuse,yeah, different subjects and we have an advisory board who audit these systems . The feeling is that perhaps it would be better if we made it more of a current events type of thing, which we did, and , um, I don't think that has been very successful because number one, we upped it to every two weeks as opposed to monthly, and by the time the newspaper gets into the classroom the news is stale, it's really stale, I mean news the next day, is not news any more, and you know you're talking with a two-week production time and so...it's sort of in limbo at this point, I'm not exactly sure what we're going to do, but...but there will be some sort of small service...

I: If you hand out booklets and things on discrimination, women's rights, and stuff, do you think that has a more active effect on people's behavior, on...I hate to use the word, but on people's consciousness than just doing the reporting?

P: Oh, all right, there are some people that,um,there's something about the printed word and I somehow feel that I am just as guilty--I mean how often have you heard "But I saw it in the newspaper!" If it is written, somehow people take it as absolute gospel and you just can't do that but I mean I don't see that <u>we</u> have any control over that. I mean, how much are you going to in-

fluence someone...on the editorial page, certainly,because that's your opinion and you're entitled to it, and you hope that that will be absorbed because you're trying to get it across but certainly on the news pages you really try to just put it out there and let the people draw their own conclusions ....and,um..

I: I'm not saying that the Post or that any paper tries to draw conclusions for the reader, just the fact that you've only got so much space and so that by drawing people's attention to one thing you have to leave out others...but ....um...see, if a station or a paper or anything has a certain pet cause,or outlook, or something, then it will influence the whole atmosphere or tone of the community in general,...there are certain things that it thinks are important, and not everybody thinks the same things are important, but if a paper thinks these type of things are important, they'll print them, and take up space... and people can only think of a certain number of things at a time...at least I know I can... and so, do you see how important it is when a focus of attention is given to some issues and not to others?

P: That goes back to just, you know, the integrity of the editor. I mean, yeah, you're dealing with human beings, and there's no way that you can get that out of there, and those people are responsible, as you say, for focusing attention on one subject and not another, and you hope to God that these people have integrity, and that they, uh... you know the other side of that coin, though, is if you are focusing attention on things that are sort of your pet interests, you don't get away with that for too long. One way or the other,we're all human beings and everybody has their pets, but still, you can't get away with it for too long...I think that there are enough people out there that are going to stop that,there are people who are not going to read your paper any more, and then all of a sudden you're circulation starts to fall off, and or if the problem lies with your reporters as opposed to the editor, the phones are going to start ringing eventually, complaining that we're only taking one particular view, or that we seem to be slanted in ....and there again you start to lose readers and when you start to lose readers than your advertising falls off and then all of a sudden you just don't have a paper any more. So, even though it's a nebuluos thing there is a safeguard in there and then the Post has an ombudsman, a reader who 's main job is to monitor the media in general and the Post in particular. When he sees something in there that tends to be sensationalistic or is inaccurate or is, you know really turning the screws when you could've used one word over another, then that's his job...

I: That's quite a job!

P: Oh, yeah! I guess he doesn't have too many friends down here because eventually he's got to hit everybody, but the other thing that we try to do to avoid that kind of thing, and we never do a 100% is, um, is the number of editors that we do have. The newsroom staff runs around four hundred people and of that we have about a hundred and fifty-five reporters and a hundred and thirty-four editors. And that's mainly to try and, y'know, to be sure that , so...we try, we really do try to be as objective and accurate and avoid sort of...

I: Is that unusual, such a high ratio of editors to reporters?

P: Yeah, I think so. The ombudsman,....um, our first ombudsman was in, like, '71,'72, and I think there was only one other newspaper in the country that had an ombudsman at the time and that was, I think, the Louisville Courier-Journal. And, not to take anything away from the Louisville Courier-Journal, but that's a one-newspaper town. So really have to try to stand on your head to let people know, you know, that you're not trying to take advantage of them... and that was not the situation with us we just felt that we should be policing ourselves. Now, it's a lot more popular, there are several, not a lot, but several in the country. We print corrections now everyday in the same place and,...this is the only newspaper I have ever worked for and I don't know too much about the editorial operations of other newspapers but I....the people who work downstairs really are, I mean they really try ...we put ourselves in positions all the time where we're looking for criticism ....we have a program which started under Public Relations where we go out into the communities, Maryland and Virginia, and we have a lunch and we invite members of the local business and political community we have anywhere from two hundred and fifty to three hundred people there who....it's a small sampling, but these people really count, they're really representative of larger groups, and we go out there and bare our souls and say, "okay, what have we done and what don't you like and that"...and one of the things that came out of those lunches, they started in like '73 I think, were our weekly sections, because people were ....oh, it was really funny if you went to Montgomery County people would say"oh, you people are just awful, we pick up the paper every morning and there's nothing in there about Montgomery County it's all about Virginia", and "Fairfax County gets the best coverage you never do anything about us" and then you'd go to Fairfax County and they'd say the same thing..."Montgomery County gets everything the whole paper's full of them you don't cover Virginia and "...you know, I don't know, maybe I suppose the Washington area is unique in that the people who live here, their need for news, and local news in

particular is insatiable...you could do an entire paper on Fairfax County and they'd tell you you missed something...and I think that's good , these things are very healthy. Lots of times there are people out there who think that we can do the impossible, you know, the Daily Planet type things, you just push one button and add another page and you should cover Johnny's home run, and it works well for us because we can get out there and explain to people why we can't, which makes them a little bit more understanding of us. They don't really realize what our problems are, so they really work both ways...

I: You said that the weekly sections came out of these lunches...

P: Yeah, because we found that that was the major complaint....it took us a year to get to all of the jurisdictions and we found that that was the absolute major complaint so the editors decided that we just had to devote more space to it,because at that time we only had "Metro" and you had to get all three into one section and so now we have these other sections...Granted it's only once a week, but at least it's a beginning...they'll probably be more, but when you get out there you find out what people want from you and what they expect from you and where you stand and where you're doing a good job ...but I really don't know of any other newspaper who just sort of gets out there and says "okay"...when we go out, Mr. Grahmn is there, Mr. Bradley is there, Don Grahmn is there, people who are in charge of the various departments, even business sides of the departments ...

I: When I was, um,planning out the research for my paper, I decided that I wanted to talk to the Post because it seemed like the Post was very conscious of all this...it seems somehow like a young paper, and Washington is fast becoming a young city just now coming into its own...

P: It's coming, it's coming...particularly in New York, it's a cow town, and I am from New York, really, and raised in Manhattan, and when I came to Washington that's what I thought and I wasn't too far off, but then I came in 1964, and I have seen growth in this city that's just absolutely unbelievable, and changes, and even the pace, the pace has picked up here. Of course, I haven't lived and worked in New York for all those years and things may have picked up there that I'm not aware of but God, I don't see how New York could have gotten any faster,but ....

I : That's really interesting because if you just skim down the questions you'll see that some of the things that I was wondering about were comparisons between the Post and the Times and Washington and New York as cultural centres, but almost in different direct-

ions, and New York, I don't know, I was born in New York, and I grew up in Boston, and I moved to Washington and I was in high school, and there have been really different paces all along the line , and even in the five or six years that I've been here I've noticed that Washington is becoming an exciting place to live.

P: It's happening so fast though, that I don't think you can help but notice..it's steamrolling, really, and the difference between the Post and the Times? If you ask Ben Bradley that question, he says the Times is just...well, "I doan't knoaw"...and it's just that the Times is just, well, it's stuffy...

I: It reaches a certain kind of person, though, an elite,in a way, and people who'd like to be an elite,the Post has gotten do much more of a reputation, well, especially since Watergate...

P: Hmmmm.

I: What first triggered the connection in my mind...was the kinds of peole that Washington was attracting..it's attracting the young, dynamic professionals that used to automatically go to New York... I was looking at Weekend Magazine and it struck me as being sort of like the New York Times magazine...it's more honest in a way, it's more geared towards the communities in terms of things, but it made me wonder if the Post wasn't striving for the same sort of audience as the Times has...

P : Yeah. Well, I don't know, the Times I think, no question, strives to be a national newspaper, and the Post doesn't. We try very hard to be a local newspaper....well, that's it, and that's why some people say that we're trying to become like the Times, because national news is in our backyard, and we can't help that, but...all circulation on a daily basis is like 596,000, daily. 775,000, maybe, Sunday. And out of all that, only 12,000 copies leave the city...I don't know what the national circulation of the Times is, but you know that a lot of it is,and so I think that's one of the differences, that we don't try to be a national newspaper. As to the type of people that we're serving, I think you sort of answered that yourself...the young, well-educated person is flocking to Washington, and even some business is....it's all good for the Post!

I: I go to school in Montreal, and I go down to Metropolitan News on Sundays to get my papers, and the Post gets there between four days and a week late, it comes up surface mail, The Times is flown up by jet. But, there's a little sign outside the door on a piece of oak tag and magic marker which says,"97% of the people who run the United States read the Washington Post."

P: Really! That's something! We did a survey of Congress, the Senate etc., once and it was something more like 99% of the people on Capitol Hill read the Post...I'm not sure, but I think it was something like that...circulation, will go up, too, it has to, because Washington is growing, and ...

I : Do you think the cultural aspect will get more attention?

P : Of course, because of the kind of people that Washington is growing with, they want to know what's going on around town, and we'll have greater needs to fill...you try to have a newspaper that is of general interest to all your readers, but if your number of readers is very high in any area, well, you've got to expand...

I: Are the same people who are involved in writing and editing for the Post the same people who do Weekend, or is it a separate staff?

P: They are employees of the Post, but they are a separate staff. They do all their own, but of course Ms. Beatty, well she's an assistant managing editor, which is way up there directly under the three top editors...so she's responsible to Bradley...but it's her thing.

I: Do they,the staff,write most of the copy,or do they solicit freelance stuff?

P: They solicit a lot of stuff, it's a small staff, it really is... there's a lot of freelance stuff...well, I mean it just depends, you know...

I: Sometimes just by talking about something, it seems to grow more. Do you think that the mere presence of Weekend magazine, the fact that there's something there to talk about what's going on, culturally and recreationally,actually encourages the development of the arts in Washington? Beyond mere articulation of them that is.

P: I don't really know. Certainly we've never tried to find that out. I think, not really,...that's not to say that the Washington Center for Performing Arts doesn't look theough there, and see if there's a heavy concentration of something, but I don't know...

I: I was thinking of people who...aren't in the Washington area, but who might be induced to come here by...

P: Well, you see the problem with that is that the Post doesn't go out. It may in future years, who can tell, ten years from now, but right now, it just doesn't.We're a local newspaper first...

I: That's really hard to believe...

P: I know, we've been screaming it since Watergate...I'll tell you something, the Post has always, long before Watergate,been known for giving the journalists on its staff enough time to do investigative reporting...always,for a long long time, before anyone ever cared about it...

P: (Huh? Oh yes, I'll be there in just a minute) The other thing that I think you should know is that ,unlike a lot of newspapers, is that we have here a very very strict separation between what we call church and state...and ...church being the newsroom and state being us here...and one does not trespass on the other...and it works, I mean it really really works. If there's something going on in the automobile industry that could shed a bad light on local automotive dealers, say, uh, we'll print it, they will print it, and we take the flak back, but...but Mrs. Grahmn, and Bradley, and everybody just insists upon that...

I: That is unique, because it seems as if papers, by necessity, are just caught in a double bind with advertising...

P: But you see, the thing is it sort of works because the advertisers are also readers, and so, okay you go to town on an automotive thing,and those people get really mad, n and they have just pulled out their advertising, just pulled it out, but then, if they're buying a house and we're doing something on mortgages,they say "gee, I didn't know that, and wasn't that good to find out", and this is something that we're really really strong on and it works really well...and you should be aware of that...

I: One last question...is the advertising for Weekend the same advertising that you get for the general paper?

P: Yeah, they don't have a separate staff.Not for that.

I: Thank you very much.

P: No trouble, and good luck with your paper. (Yes, you can come in now) If you ever think about a job in Public Realtions, stop and remember what it was like here today.

I: Okay. Thanks again.

END OF POST INTERVIEW.

Discussion -
The Washington Post Interview

Even bearing in mind the biased source of the information (i.e. a Post-employed public relations officer), the Post interview gives us many new and interesting aspects of the situation to consider.

Social Responsibility

Let us examine the material from the points of view of the major currents of thought in communications study.[16] The first of these currents is the social responsibility theory. Most present-day theories of the press (libertarian and Marxist notwithstanding) have some element of this notion worked into the fabric of their argument. Simply stated, the social responsibility theory is that the intelligent use of freedom implies responsibility, and since the press is more free than most businesses, according to our style of democratic society, it (the press) therefore carries a greater degree of responsibility than do most businesses. Or, as Theodore Peterson puts it:

> Freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society.[17]

The everyday ideas which spring from this theory are captured in phrases such as "the public's need to know", "the right to be informed", etc. Indeed, it is the idea of social responsibility which opens the interview; the Post says of itself, primarily ..."our business is to inform the public."[18] Interestingly, however, it then goes on from that to qualify its own statement: "apart from that, as a business, we ...do this and that and that and this."[19]

In studying communications, and in particular in studying the identity problems of the press ("business or social service"?), one cannot help but feel that the business aspect of the newspaper world is somehow an embarrassing necessity; when writing about journalism from the distance of an academic essay, the commercial aspect of the situation is more often considered as an intrinsic self-destructive characteristic, rather than as a healthy, necessary component of the whole. Newsmen themselves are almost apologetically defensive of their trade's capitalistic qualities, and go to great lengths to point out the objectivity of their reporting techniques. It seems to me that all of this is done not only to lend a kind of transcendental authority to their reporting, but also to almost hide the human side of the newspaper industry-- the fact that yes, it is an industry seems somehow akin to the fact that yes, religious leaders do perspire.

Stupendous amounts of energy are expended into this mystification process.[20] Energy is spent in building the myth

up by the die-hard advocates of the authoritarian press, and energy is spent in tearing the myth down, by the hard-core critics of the press. It seems that a loose opposition of sorts evolves, with social responsibility on the one hand, and mystification processes on the other.

If something or someone is responsible to you, then they must needs be, concurrently, accessible to you. If, on the other hand, something is mythic to you, it somehow passes contact (knowledge, information, wisdom, etc.) down to you; you are not capable of passing anything back up to it. A myth is rigid in its description; a myth is not part of the popular flow of culture, since it is in a displaced temporal relationship to that culture. Even though myths are born of cultural experience, they give the impression of having preceded the society of a given culture. Thus, they are immutable. You cannot change a myth; you can only destroy the original myth and attempt to replace it with a new one.

This, to an extent, is the unfortunate situation of the media institution of the press. Great though the power of the printed word may still be, the mythologized press, in our culture, has been criticized out of existence. Yet, the stigma of inaccessibility, perhaps left over from its mythic connotations, remains with the image of the press, chiefly in the real fact of the exploitative possibilities of the industry, and in the public's image of the media as possessing, at the core, an indifferent corporate soul.

But if the mythical authority of the press has been eroded, that which has been used to re-define the industry's ideal function is even more impossible a social saviour. Extreme proponents of the social responsibility theory have neglected to take into account one crucial factor: they are demanding objectivity from a human system designed and operated by human beings.

I am speaking here about the subtleties of information presentation, rather than the more obvious cases of biased reporting, slanted news, "yellow journalism", and various other forms of malpractice. The Post itself uses the phrase "separation of church and state", meaning that the business office more or less keeps out of the newsroom, and goes on to cite an example concerning its exposes of various products, even in the face of lost advertising. The interesting thing about this story is that I did not ask any questions on the issue at all; the public relations officer brought it up of her own accord as something she "thought I should know." (Here, again, is an example of the paranoia surrounding the relationship of the business side of the industry to the social side.)

For all of this focus on journalistic integrity and the purity of the informational role the newspaper should play in a society, the Post obviously does not see its involvement in the community as stopping at that level. Great emphasis is placed on the function of the Post as a "community entity" of

sorts in its own right. The criteria for this self-definition were along the lines of: a.) involvement in the school systems, b.) contributions to needy organizations, c.) development of a "current events" series aimed at bringing certain issues into the public attention through the production of "special topics booklets" (on women's issues, civil rights, etc.) and the distribution of these booklets through the school system.

The Post is a newspaper, that is its business, yet somehow the Post seems to feel that its business is not just to be a newspaper. Granted, all of these activities give favourable exposure of the Post to the community which it is "serving" (selling to), yet, does the Post really need the exposure to the point of sending guest speakers into the public school systems?

The Post's idea that a newspaper has a social responsibility toward its community in an active as well as an informational capacity is a fascinating, and is, to me at least, a fairly novel idea. More will be said concerning the potential of this type of attitude in the third and final section of this paper; for now let it be sufficient to note that apparently the idea of social responsibility can have more dimensions than was originally assigned.

Let us return for a moment to the more traditional notion of social responsibility, the idea that the public has a right to know all, and to know all in a truly objective fashion. How can any newspaper honestly provide the service

which is currently demanded of it? The most widely accepted articulation of the barriers to this free flow of information is the "gatekeeping theory of communications." The idea here is not so crude as the metaphor might cause one to imagine; again it is the subtle inevitabilities of media structure which are the villains, rather than out-and-out issues like "censorship" and "free speech."

The idea behind the "gatekeeping theory" is that as information -- news, if you will -- goes along it is categorized, greeted, treated, and processed by a battery of people who cannot help but come into contact with it, since that is their job, and that each one of these witnesses, reporters, night editors, day editors, etc. leave their own little mark on the initially "fresh" news item.[21] Thus, what started out as "fact" has become "story", in the literal sense of the word.

This, obviously, is a bad thing. In light of the possibilities of world misinformation, it is also a terrible and dangerous thing. Any newspaper, obviously, tries to combat the more engagable aspects of the gatekeeping system, unless of course that paper had been founded with the specific intention of being a very special kind of gatekeeper (I am thinking here of openly propagandistic papers). The Post must strive even harder than most to "keep an eye" on itself, since a biased article in the Post is likely to be read by someone with the real authority to act, either through misinformed

legislation, based on the article, or in vocal protest against the article.

To this end, the paper employs an ombudsman, whose job it is to act as a sort of journalistic master-at-arms for everyone else on the staff. He scans the day's copy for prejudices and one-sided coverage, as well as for typographical errors and spelling mistakes. Although the Post is very proud of its ombudsman, the sad fact is that, ultimately, he is really no more than yet another kind of gatekeeper-- if the ombudsman has the same deep, intrinsic social, moral, and political values as a given writer on the staff, then of course that writer's copy will seldom be as censured as a reporter that the ombudsman may happen to be particularly opposed to. It is seldom that anyone can be operationally aware of their own prejudices, and while the ombudsman may be sincerely concerned with his critical scan of the paper, he is, at best, just another gatekeeper.

There are other structural mechanisms which the Post employs in an attempt to monitor itself. One of the most striking of these is an abnormally high ratio of editors to reporters. Out of a four-hundred person newsroom staff, the Post employs one hundred and fifty-five reporters, and one hundred and thirty-four editors. This is an almost one-to-one relationship! In a sense, it might mean that the copy is very carefully screened before its status as "news" is legitimatized by being printed, but in another sense, it may just mean

that the information is all the more carefully processed, and thus, more subtly altered.[22]

One of my main plots for things-that-I-was-going-to-wrangle-out-of-the-Post, as it were, backfired on me completely, but the way in which it backfired is interesting, not only for the facts which it naturally brings to light, but also for the bearing it has on this problem of beating the gate-keeping system.

It seems, as we have seen, that all of the Post's internalized devices towards self-censorship fall to the same common foil-- that they are depending on each human to produce an objective attitude. However, the Post also has a series of "community involvement" programmes --other than those already mentioned --that I think serve a bonus function of keeping the Post in line with itself.

My mode of questioning during the interview was aimed at establishing the creative power that the paper had over the Washington cultural community; I wanted to bring out the fact that the Post, by merely paying attention to the arts, via their Weekend Magazine, had, to some extent actually formed the artistic and cultural scene. As it turned out, Weekend Magazine had been created out of the public's direct demand for more localized coverage of their own suburban areas.

It seems that the Post runs a series of luncheons, sort of thinly disguised critical sessions between the higher staff members of the paper, and the community leaders in various

parts of suburban Maryland and northern Virginia. During these interviews the readers are encouraged to say anything at all about how they feel about the Post directly to the people who have the most effect on the paper. In turn, the Post management gets a chance to explain to the readers some of the difficulties that arise in the production of a major metropolitan newspaper.

Again, all this is very good publicity for the Post, and how much effect the readers' complaints may or may not actually have is a question well worth asking. But in one case, at least-- the creation of Weekend Magazine --the words actually turned into something concrete.

All of this is part of another major theme of study in communications-- the relationship between the communicator and the audience-- but it is also tangential to the gatekeeping criticisms. In the case of the Post, at least, it appears as though the gatekeeping cycle includes, if not in some instances begins with, the audience itself.

Coupling the thought that the audience sometimes has the power to determine what form its media may assume, as illustrated in the creation of Weekend Magazine, and the statement made by the Post's public relations officer regarding self-censorship via circulation drop-off,[23] it may be that there is actually more of an interface between the newspaper and the paper's mass audience than most major communications theories seem to imply. Even within the business environment in which our journalism system currently operates, it seems

that the role of the media is not necessarily so rigidly defined, and that the role of the masses receiving the communication need not be quite so passive.

Part II: The Smithsonian Institution

Introducing the Smithsonian Institution

> The Smithsonian Institution was created by act of the Congress of the United States in 1846 to carry out the terms of the will of James Smithson of England, who had bequeathed his entire estate to the United States of America "to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."[24]

The initial wording of Smithson's bequest, understandably, has resulted in an institution of incredible proportion and scope. In its dual capacity as a major research centre and as a massive museum complex, the Smithsonian employs approximately 4,000 people, hosts 21 million visitors annually, and owns over 700 million museum and research objects.[25]

Its museum buildings range from art galleries to environmental study centres to the Air and Space Museum to the National Zoo. All in all, there are no less than forty separate programmes of activity which fall under the administration of the Institution.

In terms of organization, the Smithsonian is composed of numerous nearly-autonomous museums or research programmes, which are ultimately responsible to the Board of Regents. In turn, the Board itself is more or less accountable to Congress. The Board consists of the United States Chief Justice, the Vice President, three members of the Senate, three members of

the House of Representatives, and last but not least, nine citizens, who have been appointed members by joint Congressional resolution.

The financial backing for the Smithsonian comes partially from private funds and partially from Congressional appropriation. In most Smithsonian literature, the museum/research complex is referred to as "an independent trust establishment."[26] The exact nature and degree of this "independence" is something to be investigated, since approximately 80% of the Smithsonian's funds come from Congressional allotment, and only 20% from private sources. Exactly who or what the Smithsonian may or may not be "independent" from will be discussed at a later point in the paper.

The main headquarters of the Institution are in Washington, D.C., although the Smithsonian maintains numerous other installations all over the world. Before discussing the more abstract qualities of the Institution, let us consider the concrete reality of the Smithsonian. This will serve to illustrate some of the very real and present factors which Smithsonian personnel must constantly contend with.

Probably the best-known of the Smithsonian's buildings is the "Castle on the Mall", designed by James Renwick, and built during the years 1847 to 1855. Fashioned in the style of a red brick Norman castle, the building is now the administrative headquarters for the Institution.

There are many other famous and unmistakably Smithsonian buildings in the Washington complex. The Arts and Industries

Building, next to the Castle, is a giant carnivalesque-type structure, housing exhibits that range from textiles to scuba gear. Such comprehensive attention to the activities of mankind is characteristic of the Smithsonian's approach to the fulfillment of its purported task— "the increase and diffusion of knowledge."

Here is a listing, with brief description of the the more significant Smithsonian activities, of just some of the Institution's operations.[27]

Human Studies and Related Fields

The Smithsonian maintains numerous centres in the area of humanistic studies. Some of the centres are primarily research bases, such as the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. Others are designed specifically for the dissemination of information to the lay public, such as the National Museum of Natural History and National Museum of Man, located on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Still other centres are constructed for the sole purpose of the exchange of information on the sophisticated level of international science; the Centre for the Study of Man, and the Smithsonian Science Information Exchange are good examples of two such organizations.

The Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology is perhaps one of its better-known public buildings. Areas of

human development which the museum attends to include graphic arts, textiles, photography, postal history, numismatics, American period costume and house furnishings, American, ethnic and western cultural history, musical instruments, preindustrial cultural history, and naval, military, and political history of the United States.

The Smithsonian also maintains the National Portrait Gallery. Along less intellectual lines, the Institution is also responsible for the care and upkeep of the National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C.

Science, Technology and Research

The Smithsonian's attention to the hard scientific aspects of American life is not in the least overshadowed by their copious cultural and historical material. In this area, as in the area of the human sciences, the Smithsonian maintains both purely-research oriented and purely public-oriented establishments.

Three of the Smithsonian's research centres are the Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies, the Fort Prince Bureau in Florida, which carries out research in geology and marine biology, and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Astrophysical Laboratory boasts the ultimate equipment available to astrophysical researchers that is available today, and operates in association with the Astrophysics Department of Harvard Univer-

sity.

The best-loved and most-famous Smithsonian exhibition building, in the area of hard sciences, is the National Air and Space Museum (Amy Carter has been there four times). The Museum contains relics and artifacts of man's search for wings from his very first gropings to his triumphant moon landing. Kitty Hawk, the Spirit of St. Louis, the early Apollo crews, and the lunar module - all are real and present elements at the National Air and Space Museum.

Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and Public Service

The Smithsonian, in addition to its humanistic studies, also manages a number of traditional museums. First and foremost among these, of course, is the National Gallery of Art, but the Smithsonian also operates the Freer Gallery of Art, the Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Renwick Gallery, the National Collection of Fine Arts, and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, in New York City.

As far as the performing arts go, the Smithsonian sponsors varying troupes of performers, and is also affiliated with John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The Smithsonian takes quite an interest in education, too, which is revealed in their sponsorship of programmes such as "Reading Is Fundamental." RIF, as it is informally called, distributes paperback books, free of charge, to children who live in economically underdeveloped areas of the United States.

The children are allowed to retain possession of the books.

The Smithsonian also maintains a series of lectures, seminars, workshops, and speakers' programmes on all different planes of educative skill, from pre-school to postgraduate levels.

Support Activities

To better facilitate its work in all of these diverse fields, the Smithsonian owns and operates two presses, an office of Telecommunication, and Smithsonian Magazine. (note: the distribution method for Smithsonian Magazine is through the Smithsonian Associates programme, about which more will be said later on.)

All of this, and more, is what is referred to, when one refers to the Smithsonian Institution.

Why Study the Smithsonian?

There is nothing in the world like the Smithsonian Institution. Nowhere is there a rival to its size, its range of interest, its sheer audacity of purpose. No other single organization seeks - let alone claims - the function of documenting the multiple facets of humanity and the total civilisation of the world. The Smithsonian, one of whose functions it is to communicate about technology, is a special and highly developed technology of communication in its own right.

It does not merely utilize the existing forms of communication, but it has developed "the museum" into a new and special form of communication.

Through its historical exhibitions, the Smithsonian reveals history to those people who have been the most affected by it. Through its scientific exhibitions, the Smithsonian describes the process and the result of industrial research to those people who have the most to gain, and the most to lose, by its development. Through its cultural exhibitions, the Smithsonian discusses the structure for civilsation for people who may be only dimly aware that there <u>is</u> a structure for civilisation. Whether it started out with this notion or not, the Smithsonian serves the purpose of explaining, to all comers, but in particular to the wide bulk of middle-class, slightly bored but dutifully attentive American populace, what that populace is, why that is, where it is, how it got there, what it all means, and where it is going next. The Smithsonian cheerfully analyzes the world, and presents the result to the spectator-participant.

The fact that the Smithsonian is a tremendously popular institution with the very society which it seeks to illustrate is indicative not only of the deep need for the kind of organization of the world which the Smithsonian's categorization process can provide. The Smithsonian obligingly pigeonholes the world, for 21 million visitors every year.

This analytical function of the Smithsonian is communi-

cation at its highest, most incredibly complex level. To walk through the Smithsonian is an experience in total communication immersion.

But what sort of event is the Smithsonian Institution, from a communicational point of view? While it does sponsor a great deal of "media" material, through its press and its Office of Telecommunications, the informational complex itself is woven within the very physical structure of the place; the larger, more important communicational processes are worked into the displays, the exhibits, the halls of various museum buildings.

This built-in quality of communication at the Smithsonian is one reason why I chose to study the Institution. That the Smithsonian is a communicational phenomenon is hardly arguable, but it differs from more standard information-providers in that it is a total system; it generates that which it presents. Marketing, subscription renewals, and advertising are not real problems for the Smithsonian; audience, gatekeeping, and interaction with the community are.

The Smithsonian Institution as a communicative organization is more "pure", more free from commercial complications, than, for example, a newspaper. Consequently, a comparison of the nature and the operation of the two entities would be likely to provide some interesting conclusions on the function and the structure of each separate one.

We have now established some idea of the Smithsonian's

substance and nature. Let us begin our questioning of the Institution.

The Smithsonian Institution: Questions

I began the series of interviews by a session with Mr. Alvin Rosenfeld, Office of Public Affairs. I went to Mr. Rosenfeld with the idea of establishing an overall picture of the Smithsonian Institution. My questions, consequently, were general, and not too complex:

1.) What is the basic organizational structure of the Museum?

2.) How is it decided which subjects receive more "coverage" than others?

3.) What is the business relationship between the Smithsonian Institution and Smithsonian magazine? How dependent for financial support is the magazine upon the Institution?

4.) Does Smithsonian magazine actively solicit material, or is it largely staff-written? What degree of "say" does the Institution have in the magazine's acceptance policy? Does the material which appears in Smithsonian magazine have to be "cleared" by anyone high-up in the Institution before it appears in print?

5.) Can you tell me about the Smithsonian Associates Programme?

6.) How does the Smithsonian hire its staff?

The purpose of some of these questions is apparent; I ask about the Smithsonian's hiring procedures because I am interested in how the "gatekeepers" of the Smithsonian reach their positions - and what characteristics a "gatekeeper" must have, as required by the media organization itself.

The reasoning behind other of the questions may be less obvious. I inquired about the general nature of the Smithsonian Associates Programme because-- aside from the direct confrontation on the museum grounds-- the Associates Programme is the most obtrusive of the Smithsonian's relationships with its public.

The intent of my questions concerning Smithsonian magazine were twofold. First, while the magazine is not simply a mouthpiece for the Smithsonian, it is the officially recognized, regular publication of the Institution. As such, it must feel the pressure of at least a lively interest on the part of Museum officials concerning the format and the content of the magazine. Perhaps by examining tensions which might exist between the two, the Smithsonian's general policy about self-censorship would be illuminated.

Second, I was curious as to the degree of parallel situation that might exist between the Smithsonian Institution and Smithsonian magazine, and the Washington Post and Week-

end Magazine. While I recognized from the outset that the purported function of each publication sprang from a different basis, I couldn't help but wonder if, in more strictly communicational terms, they couldn't help but fill the same role.

The remainder of the questions I opened up to Mr. Rosenfeld concerned the interplay between the organizational structure of the Institution and the communicational material which resulted from that structure, and which became the presented material (through exhibition, the museum's equivalent to the written word) of that Institution. This question can be transposed into two different phrases, which indicate two of the different levels of study on which it can be considered. The first level concerns the relationship between the locus of power and the locus of expression[28] (material presented to the audience/public) in this form of media. The second level is more traditionally put. What is the relationship between the Smithsonian's form and the Smithsonian's content?

Mr. Rosenfeld was extremely co-operative, and very helpful in filling me in on as much of the Smithsonian story as he himself knew. However, it became necessary for me to go to other sources, in order to gather more specialized information. With Mr. Rosenfeld's assistance, I conducted two more Smithsonian interviews after the original one. The second interview was with Mr. John Jameson, who currently serves the Institution as the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

Mr. Jameson confirmed and added to Mr. Rosenfeld's information regarding the administrative functionings of the Smithsonian. Following that interview, I went to see a Mr. Edwards Park, a member of the Board of Editors, as well as a contributing columnist for Smithsonian Magazine.

Unfortunately, I was unable to tape-record the Jameson and the Park interviews. However, here is the most complete possible transcript of my interview with Mr. Rosenfeld.

Transcript
Interview with Alvin Rosenfeld,
The Smithsonian Institution
December, 1978.

R=Rosenfeld
I=Interviewer

R: Let me just say one thing in general...the Smithsonian is a highly decentralized organization.It has a central administartion, over there in the Castle and by extension, this building,it has thirteen museums and it has any number of other activities. Some years ago, I don't really know when, a decision was made to adopt a decentralized approach. Each museum has its own director and by extension, unless it's a very small one, it's own public affairs and information office. They make a great deal of their own policy. We act as a policeman, if you will,and as a conduit. Now,there are some things which are Institution-wide in nature, and we deal with those things ourselves,but in terms of the individual museum,our role is a cooperative one.

I: That's the sort of thing that I was interested in,what sort of things are "Institution-wide" in terms of criteria for material which you accept and prepare for public exposure...and the general policy of...the exact degree to which the Smithsonian sees its role as informational...

R: Well, you have to understand one thing...the Office of Public Affairs deals mainly with the press,okay? The media,okay? But, there are many many other ways in which an institution like the Smithsonian gets its message across...we have a program called Resident Associates Program which has to date 50,000 members. These are people who live in the metropolitan Washington area.They are members, and as part of that membership they get a subscription to Smithsonian magazine, a membership card, and a whole series of programs which they can attemd. Most of those programs are not for free, but the fees are reduced for members. Since we are a public institution we cannot normally say "this is only for members"... we have to offer it to two kinds of people, the general public and the non-general public, the members.We also have a National Associates Program, which has one million seven hundred thousand members,and which also gets the Smithsonian magazine. Now,the National Associates,they have,um,they try to get their message to a number of cities outside Washington,usually five or six cities,

and they will organize,usually a week with an indvidual museum, and its membership, and they will bring in a number of lecturers and a number of exhibits. We have a thing called SITES--Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service --which has something like twelve hundred exhibits a year which are traveling around. Those are not for free. A museum who wants one has to pay something, usually it's a very limited sum of money, you can go see them as well. Those are just some of the ways in which we reach the public. We have a division of Performing Arts, which has programs. Generally those programs do cost money, but much less than they would cost at a local theatre. They They are normally related in one way to American or general culture. Jazz series, pop series, chamber music, which is not related to American culture per se, but which... well,a couple of weeks ago I attended a performance which they gave.."An Evening With Victor Herbert",which ...to re-create the days of Victor Herbert,there was a commentator, an introducer or some guy, who did a narration of Victor Herbert's career.There were four singers...it was a beautiful program,ok, they did it...which means that they are,in a sense, entrepeneurs...What else? We have a free show theatre, every Wednesday and Thursday,we have other films, some of which are free, some of which are not,we have lectures constantly, and we, the Office of Public Affairs, prints evey month in the Washington Post and the Star a very formal but productive calendar of monthly events. Now these are not all the events that go on in a given month, but it is a random sampling. I'll give you a copy of that...we also have two book publishing firms.One is called The Smithsonian Instituation Press and it publishes mainly scholarly works. ....some of the works are extremely beautiful and may grow out of an exhibit...the National Portarait Gallery did this...we did one called "Fifty American Faces" which again, was of portraits in the National Portrait Gallery, but which was accompanyed by essays...these essays were,in fact,evaluations of the human beings...About two years ago the Smithsonian launched something which has gone through a variety of names but which is now known as Smithsonian Exhihibition Books. This is a popular book publishing firm.They publish things like this....which was offered first through Smithsonian magazine to the Smithsonian Associates...

.....there were also some kind of mailings, to all of the one milion seven hundred thousand Associates.Sales have been about three hundred thousand...That is another way of getting out the Smithsonian message. What is the Smithsonian message? Okay. It's officially "the increase and diffusion of knowledge." We'll get to that,however.They have since published two other books,one is called The Magnificant Foragers,...which deals with the exploration of natural history. The development of natural history which really began, I suppose, at the beginning of the nineteenth century...and mainly about Smithsonian explorers and what they have done. The second book is

called the Smithsonian Book of Invention. Which again is about the adventure of invention and how inventors invent and so forth. You can hardly call these books--they're not cheap, on the one hand--I'm not talking about price,not cheap in feeling, but they're not scholarly works, either. [illegible] Popular books...so when you come and talk to me, you're really only touching a tiny part of wht we do in terms of the public.What happened today? On the one hand, the Vice-President visited the Air and Space Museum at nine o'clock this morning...he's a member of the Board of Regents...at 9:30, in the Gem Hall, which is where the Hope Diamond is,we had this... The donation of King George and the Dragon...he is worth,probably, a million and a half bucks...

I: I love the opening line to that book about the Hope..."We at the Smithsonian have finally learned to live with the Hope Diamond. It has not been easy." I love that. You must run into problems like that a lot...

R: At the Museum of History and Technology today--they're having a sort of Christmas Carnival--there are thousands of people milling around here,listening to Christmas carols, Christmas stories,Channukuh stories,who knows what,and there's a whole program of events which... which...I'll find that program for you at some point during the day...That,too, is a way of attracting the public...now,I want to be specific on this,ok? The other day,Thursday,the press information officer at the Museum of Natural History calls me--I've got a major story.Okay,Tom,I'll come on over and we can talk about it.The story is this, and that he will be presented on Wednesday.How you going to handle it? Well, tell the gem curator we'll be there,the donar will be there,we'll have a presentation ceremony.How should we handle it from a public relations point of view? I suggested "let's run a press advisory"...so those were hand-delivered by this office, to all the major people,and we made telephone calls to the New York Time,The WashingtonPost,the AP,the UPI,Reuters,all the major papers, etc.,we went over together,suggested certain changes,and we produced, and had it ready,but when the actual ceremony took place,then we left,and let the curator take over...we let him take the spotlight because it was on his level, the level of a museum activity,rather than an Institution function,even though it was accepted in the name of the Smithsonian...Secretary Ripley came to the ceremony to look at the thing, to shake hands with the donar, and what not... but very carefully,diplomatically, left before the actual ceremony took place...it's a very sensitive area...you try to give each museum its own...uniqueness,its own autonomy,...On the other hand, I don't know this for a fact, but I would imagine that in certain cases gifts might have to be approved by the central administration... Now...

I: Okay, now...now can we just touch on this for a little bit?
R: All right.
I: So often, in the running of an institution like this, things like

this occur, and you don't really know what will happen until you have a test case, but I'm starting to get a picture of the Smithsonian, as you say, as very independant,very unique,with this overall administration trying very hard not to be an obtrusive administration,...In terms of things like gifts,and exhibits, and things that different museums are putting forth,how much "say" does the Administration of the Smithsonian have?

R: I really don't know...I would,I would suggest to you--how long you going to be in town?

I: Probably to the eighth or ninth of January.

R: My boss,Larry Taylor,is a member of the Executive Committee of the Smithsonian,and I will try to arrange a meeting between you and him. He can discuss with you certain policy matters much better than can I. First of all, he's been around here longer,and secondly he is a member of the Executive Committee. Now,there are two executive committees. The Smithsonian is run,essentially,by the Board of Regents. That Board of Regents is composed of various government and private people. Appointed by the,uh....the Chief Executive Officer of the Senate,I guess...it would have to be, however,with the agreement of...however parties usually make that decision...I think always there are two members of the majority party,and one member of the minority party.And,uh,three members of the House,who are appointed by the Speaker of the House.There are nine citizen members who are appointed by the Regents themselves.Okay...they only meet three or four times a year,in between their sessions, since there are decisions to be made, there is there is an executive committee of sorts which normally prepares for the next meeting of the Board of Regents...also,makes decisions if there are decisions which need to be made.Um,I would imagine on an issue of major importance they might make a voice-call of the other members of the Board.Then,there's also an executive committee of the senior staff...which consists...now,Mr. Ripley's the Secretary,there have only been something like eight secretaries of the Smithsonian in over a hundered years...so the mere name,"Secretary of the Smithsonian" has a certain...clout to it...But, at any rate there is this other executive committee which consists of the Assistant Secretay for Science, the Assistant Secretary for Art and History, the Chief Consul,and a number of other people representing different areas ranging from security guards and that kind of stuff and maintenance of the buildings to Secretary of Administration and that kind of thing--I can also get you a list of those people. Now,they meet virtually every week, and they report to each other on what they're doing,and because of the way in which the situation operates, there are seldom votes among them, on any specific matter,but there will bea concensus reached,and I assumme...I really don't know about gifts,about what happens with gifts,but Larry would be able to tell you that.But that's getting away from Public Affairs, which is what you wanted to talk to me about.

I: There's two really broad fields of interest here.I'm trying to think of connections which would be possible between,say the spread of information and the collection of it. Well, it's almost a very obvious connection;decisions about what is accepted and what is,once accepted...decisions about how to present it, are very interesting because they influence what people think of as the overall picture here.Um,so, at one end, I guess it's Public Affairs,but at the other end it's high-power policy.

R: The Smithsonian's policy ...okay,um, my boss, Laurence Taylor, is a memeber of the Executive Committee and is...Co-ordinator for Public Information and Congressional Relations.As a member of the Executive Committee he gets to form some policy but, again, policy on the highest level would only be formed by the Board of Regents.As I pointed out to you the Board of Regents consists of the Chief Justice, etc. etc.,...our basic policy would be made by the Board of Regents, but, obviously,the Executive Committe on the one hand, and the individual museums on the other hand,are not going to burden the Board of Regents with all their decisions.They will make their decisions, as best they understand, as laid down within the guidelines of the Institution.

I: Is there any published source for these "guidelines"?

R: I don't know...I don't know if there's a need for it... Well, take an example...some years ago the Museum of African Art came to the Smithsoniam and said "we would like to join you". The Museum of African Art is a small museum, managed by a remarkable man who fifteen years ago was a Foreign Service Officer, and who founded the Museum...they were in a lot of finacial problems, and he wanted to join the Smithsonian for that reason, and because he thought the Smithsonian could give him a lot of extra exhibits. On the one hand, we had to explore it, and it was explored by the Secretary,and make a recommendation to the Board of Regents. ~~We published that report~~ On the other hand, Congress had to approve it.

I: Really? Just because...

R: We are unique, we are...we are a Federal Instituion, a Federal... trust,um,the acquistion of any museum, therefore, has to pass through Congress. Why? Congress provides about...first of all, Congress feels that it has the right to know what we're doing, and to give basic acceptance to that or not. Secondly,Congress provides something of a per cent of...Federal funds,in one way or another, provide about eighty per cent of our budget.Now, the acquistion of the Museum of African Art would come to a finacial burden of, of about a million dollars a year.Okay, so it happened that Hubert Humphrey,in one of his last acts, on the Hill, made a speech in which he advocated the Smithsonian's acquisition of the Museum of African Art, which he had supported from the beginning. Had he lived, he would have introduced the legislation.I don't know if it was after his death or after his departure from the Hill,anyway, the legislation was introduced and it passed Congress and it was signed by the President.Now, that is what's called "authorization legislation". Now we have to go back to Congress and say,"okay,now you have authorized us to acquire this museum, and you know that it will cost a million dollars a year--we hereby request that million dollars."

That's part of the Federal system. It has nothing to do with the Smithsonian clause, that's just the way the Federal government operates. Anything it does there is, a.) authorization and then b.) appropriation. I suppose this is to give a sort of second check to think...you can say in principle you approve of something but then you have the chance later on to say, wait a minute, I don't think it's going to work. Or, oh wait a minute but we've changed our minds. Now, why were we interested in the Museum of African Art? It adds an element to this museum which hadn't been there before, it does represent the cultural heritage of twenty million Americans, it is our duty to serve them as well as it is our duty to serve others, and it's part of the overall cultural heritage, it's part of America's cultural heritage. Okay, so we're going to take it over,...now, we have...a great number of constituancies...we have a constituancy in each museum, and because their audience is there...you have a so-called Mall audience, but even they vary...you have over there at the Freer Gallery of Art, Near Eastern and Far Eastern, mainly...a small amount of turn-of-the-century American art, I doubt that they get more than three or four hundered thousand visitors a year. And then down the road you have the National Air and Space Museum which gets 10 million, okay? Now, when the Freer issues a news release it's going to go to art editors, local magazines, national magazines...when the Air and Space Museum issus a news releasse, it's going to go to the general press, but it's also going to go to some specialists, maybe to science writers, maybe to their own air and space list, God knows what publications that are Air and Space oriented. Okay, those are a couple of museums on the Mall. Them you have museums off the Mall, which are problems because they're not on the Mall. The Renwick, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Collection of Fine Arts. They have series of specific audiences, too, and not just one, because they do a variety of things. The Renwick does one, one does another, and so on. They too have an audience, or a series of audiences. You have in New York the Cooper-Hewitt museum, which also has its specific set of audiences. Now, in addition to those audiences, you have the Resident Associates, and a vast local audience. There's the inner city, and there's the affluent suburbs. You have to appeal to both, to all those audiences so that, for example, when you get into a field like public relations, you might do a radio...what's called a PSA, a Public Service Announcement, usually this is early Sunday mornings...umm,... you can do them in a variety of ways. You can just send the text to selected radio and television stations, or you can do an audio-tape, um, or you can do a film, or videotape. Depending on how much

money you have, and how important you think it will be. Now, we have done both. We haven't done many video-tapes or films, but we have done a couple. In addition, we have a national constituancy. We have a national constiuancy for two reason, frankly. One, we are a national museum. It is our duty to serve the nation, and by extension, the world. That may sound pretentious, but the nation and the world come to us and demand that they be served. And it is our function to do that. About two thirds of the peope who visit the major museums are out-of-towners, About one third are Washingtonians and repeaters. Meaning they come again and again and again. A small example...the President came to the Air and Space Museum a few weeks ago. He had never been here before, cetainly not as President and I don't think even before that. He went to see the very famous film called "To Fly". Amy was with him. She, it turns out had seen "to Fly" four times. We have lots of people like that, Washingtonians who come agaian and again and again to see they same things...but the other two thirds come from around the country. So, when we do a public relations event, we deal on three levels. Four levels. One, a specific audience which is likely to be interested in a specififc thing. Two, the general audience in town and by extension the suburban audience. Three, the regional press...let's say we send out or we do a PSA, we're going to send that intially to twenty-five stations, and see how it plays. We will send it to some of the big stations that service the Washington area, and smaller stations in Virginia and Pennsylvania...we figure on an audience within a radius of 250,300 miles. And then there's the whole nation, and we may, at a later date, send a PSA all around the country...we may. Ummm, in addition, we have a Congressional constituancy. We have Congressmen who are specifically interested in our activities and who want and we have Congress. We decided last year that it didn't make sense to keep the Smithsonian buildings on the Mall open until nine o'clock at night...so we made a decision... to keep the winter hours until the beginning of June. Congressmen began gettting feedback about that from their constituancies... school groups who come to Washington for three days or four days, and the tour leaders who say "ok, here is our outline, here's what we're going to do, we're going to go to the Smithsonian...hey! Wait a minute!" So, a problem is created. What do we do about it? We have, first of all, two problems. One is our relationship with our national constiuancy, who pays our bills, and two, a problem with Congress. Are they going to be hostile when our next appropriation comes up? So, the decision will probably be reviewed by the whole Board of Regents because if it costs something like an extra $200,000 to keep the musuem open during that period we just don't make the choice to go. But it's a policy decision you just have to make.

You know, and like any policy decision in any area of world or human relations, there is never a clear yes or no. In addition we have foreigners...they'll come, they're in Washington, so they'll come,ok? In addition, we have a lot of scientific activities,and we have other areas which are not museums,like the Astrophysical Lab in Cambridge. We have a major research station in Panama... it goes back into the twenties when when there were here at the Smithsonian a lot of people in Natural History who were interested in that type of thing...

I: Is ok if I ask you a couple of questions at this point?

R: Sure.

I: This is all very interesting, and it's raising even more interesting questions, like,...some of the Smithsonian's activities must be dictated by what's available in certain fields, but how much how many current Smithsonian activities, exhibits, whatever, grow out of a "personal interest" on the parts of Smithsonian staff? Or, activities directed from Congressional or...'

R: Oh, I haven't been around here long enough to answer that... Larry might be able to. I think the best for you to do is to look at some of this literarture and then go over to an individual museum and ask them about it...and then come back again...but, some activity spring out of the nature of the museum...an example would be the "Living Portraits" program at the national Pot Portrait Gallery... po people coming in and giving...senior citizens coming in and giving lectures which were,in essence, portraits of themselves... there are all kinds of spin-offs of that type...

I: And for the most part, they can go ahead with this sort of thing without, without too much..word from above...?

R: I would think so, yeah, I would think so, but I think that they would probably also let the Secretary know...a letter in the office, or something...I'm sure when the Gem Hall accepted this dragon, they informed them of it. Beforehand. We've run into criticsm, sometimes, some of us. Should we accept Archie Bunker's chair? Americana? You have to be very careful with the whole commercial aspect of it.

END OF TAPE.

Discussion of the Smithsonian Institution'

I. FORM: Effects of the Administrative Structure of the Smithsonian From a Communicational Point of View.

Gatekeeping and Self-Censorship

Since there are so many separate, autonomous museum complexes structured within the total administration of the Smithsonian, it is extremely difficult for any overall bias, any across-the-board value slant, to manifest itself in the Institution's policy-making apparatus. This is a curious inversion of the old gatekeeping theory; in the case of the Smithsonian, the more gatekeepers present, the less the (intentional) distortion of information. Why should this be so? Why should something that is a serious problem for most media institutions turn into a beneficial trait in the Smithsonian's character?

The answer lies in the interplay of autonomy and authority which earmarks Smithsonian bureaucracy, and also in the very nature of the message being presented. General information concerning a nation's cultural and technological history, lies in the public domain of knowledge. Like news, information must pass through an intermediary in order to reach its audience. News, by definition, must be brought to the public attention while it is still immediate. The sort of information that the Smithsonian deals in (history, art, tech-

nology) may be brought to the public attention at any time. It is more detailed than is news. It is the clarification of a slowly acquired cultural heritage. The Smithsonian's message, really, is an enlargement upon what was once news. There exists this thing, this event, this person - that is news. There exists (or existed) this thing, this event, this person, and here is all which surrounds it - that is the Smithsonian.

The Smithsonian's kind of information is surrounded by a larger, more stable context than is a piece of news. It can be much more easily "checked up on" than can be a piece of news. The Smithsonian's information has been around longer, more attention has been paid it, and thus a challenger could very easily seek to verify or to discredit Smithsonian statements by repairing to other sources. This cannot be done with bona-fide "news." Is is extremely difficult to find an objective, yet comprehensive source to easily investigate current events. How can one research a headline? The only way to check up on one source of news is by consulting other sources of news. The Smithsonian's material can be corroborated by something as simple as an encyclopedia, or as elaborate as a doctoral thesis.

The Smithsonian fully realizes that it is capable of being investigated, and in accordance with its strict academic scruples conducts itself very carefully.

However, it is not only the nature of the Smithsonian's message which keeps the Institution on the straight and nar-

row. In a situation where both funding and administrative directives come from a central executive power (the Board of Regents and Congress), the most logical place for a political or a social class-oriented bias to enter the administrative mechanism would be from above, from that highest level.

Consider in particular the fact that the Smithsonian is financially dependent, on the one hand, to as political a creature as Congress. On the other hand, the Smithsonian is funded by as aristocratic a social class as its "private donater" - Carnegies and Mellons, for example. It appears at first glance that the Smithsonian might be a dramatically prejudiced organization, almost in the cliche manner of the WASP, wealthy, Republican upper-class.

This, however, is not the case, and for a variety of reasons. On the simplistic level, by the time any subtle but powerful directive from the head office filtered down to the actual daily workings of the individual museum administrations, it would have passed through so many diverse, and often dissenting, mouths that its final effect on the face the museum presents to the public would be almost negigable. The gatekeeping effect would have "kept the gate" closed to any prejudicing message.

Let us consider the problem of the Smithsonian being ultimately answerable to Congress. First of all, the Smithsonian has been in existence since 1846. Between 1846 and the present day, a great many different political administrations,

with a great many different political inclinations, have been in and out of power. The Democratic Party and the Republican Party traditionally adhere to conflicting social, intellectual, and political platforms. It is grossly inaccurate to carry these traditional descriptions to extreme lengths. One cannot consider the Democrats as a cohesive group of pure, burning liberals, and the Republicans as a coalition of conservative, capitalist reactionaries. These stereotypic classifications simply are not correct. However, it is acceptable to loosely assign certain ideas and principles primarily to one group, and certain ideas and principles primarily to the other; Democratic policy-making <u>does</u> tend to be more liberal and Republican policy-making <u>does</u> tend to be more conservative.

But what does all of this have to do with the gatekeeping structure of the Smithsonian Institution? The United States Congress houses both Democratic and Republican representatives. These are the people who decide how much Federal money should or should not be allocated to the Institution. Some of these people are liberal, and some are not. Some of these people are conservative, and some are not. The vast majority of them are in-between the two classifications, and must therefore base any decision they make regarding the proper allocation of Federal funds totally on the general feeling of their constituency, at any given moment.

The Congressional decision directly determines the dollar and cents amount of 80% of the Smithsonian's budget. No

one in Congress, Democrat or Republican, is forced to vote in favour of giving the Smithsonian money. Federal money is short. The only reason the Smithsonian will continue to receive funding from Congress is if the members of Congress and their constituencies honestly feel that the Smithsonian provides a real and valuable service to the public.

It then follows that the Smithsonian must be able to provide a real and valuable service to a public of widely varying tastes and social outlooks. People who would be likely to vote for Ted Kennedy as a Presidential candidate must be led to consider the vast sums of Federal money poured into the the Smithsonian as money well spent. However, people who would be likely to vote for George Wallace for the same position must also be led to feel the same way. More importantly, both of their feelings must be of a high enough intensity to convince their respective legislators to vote the same way on the issue - to vote in the direction of giving away tax dollars!

This financial situation puts the Smithsonian into a very tight corner. In order to survive as an institution of any great magnitude, the Smithsonian needs that Federal money. It follows, clearly, that the Institution is not going to do anything seriously antagonizing to Congress. The problem lies in the schizoid personality of the Congress with whom the Smithsonian must deal. Consider an example:

The Curator of Museum of History and Natural Science decides to do an exhibit on black soldiers in the Union Army during the Civil War. The exhibit depicts a camp scene, in

which several white officers squat around a map, while one black soldier peels potatoes over by the tent, and a Negro sergeant stands in the background, holding the reins to the (white) captain's horse. The legend under the diorama reads "Strategy planning session in the Civil War."

Now consider what happens when this scene crops up in casual conversation at the Congressional Dining Hall. Gathered around the lunch table are a group of Congressmen, a random sampling of Georgians, Virginians, Marylanders and Massachusetts-members. These people are all on a friendly basis, but it's June in Washington, D.C., the temperature is ninety-five degrees and the humidity is 90%. They've been working hard on the new fiscal budget and everyone is frazzled.

To escape from shop talk for a while, the Maryland rep describes the new exhibit which just opened at the Smithsonian. One of the Virginians looks up from his plate, grins, and says, "Well you Marylanders never were quite sure where to put your 'darkies' anyway!" He's just joking, but the Marylander feels defensive, and realizes that perhaps the display <u>was</u> making a subtle comment about the irony of the Union Army keeping blacks in servile positions even while they were supposedly fighting a war to liberate them. The Massachusetts rep, all spit and vinegar, charges out with, "Well, yeah, why do they have to show the blacks only in stereotypic roles? In Salem they sometimes made lieutenant, or even captain! I don't think that's a very fair way to present things!"

The Georgian, who has been taking a lot of ribbing about Billy Beer and peanuts lately, says, "Oh, I think it's extremely fair! I think at last they're coming out and being honest about exactly how hypocritical you-all were during the War, 'let's free the slaves - so they can peel our potatoes!'" He is silent for a minute, contemplating his mock turtle soup. "They still got the name wrong, though. Everybody knows it was the War Between the States!"

End of lunch scene. Everyone is slightly offended. It just happens that this particular muggy afternoon, Congress is voting on the allocation of funds to the Smithsonian Institution. What happens? Still smarting from the nicks the flying fur made at lunch, none of the Congressmen except the Georgian, who has decided to forgive the Smithsonian its ignorance, vote to re-allocate funds.

Granted, this is just one example, and I have presented it with many other factors (like Washington heat) which may or may not enter into a Congressional decision. But this is precisely the sort of problem which the Smithsonian has been forced to deal with throughout its career as a Federal Institution. What if mainland China (before the Carter recognition) desired to make a gift to the Smithsonian of its most valuable national pottery collection? People who consider Red China a threat, a vile entity in the world, would be vehemently against any friendly interaction between the two nations, culturally-oriented exchanges included. Progressives,

on the other hand, may see the offer as an opportunity to begin establishing friendly cultural ties, a long overdue move. The Smithsonian cannot do anything that would alienate either political faction. But it must do something. So, what does the Smithsonian do?!

And here, precisely, is where the administrative structure of the Smithsonian enters into the determination of its communicational content. It is not enough for the Smithsonian to present an issue, and to present it (academically) well. Because it receives its funds from an outside organization and a fundamentally schizoid political organization at that, the Smithsonian must always present both sides of the issue. The Smithsonian must be as comprehensive, as objective as possible in its exhibits, because the groups of people who pay for those exhibits are as a group neither objective nor comprehensive. The Smithsonian must cover all the bases.

Obviously, the Smithsonian pursues comprehension and objectivity in its exhibits for many reasons besides the Institution's peculiar financial situation. Academic excellence based on thorough research has always been an ideal of the Smithsonian's activities. Nonetheless, the hard reality of the funding problem often puts teeth into a pre-existant Smithsonian goal.

And it tries to do this. In the case of the Civil War exhibit, the Smithsonian would probably take great care to

erect another diorama near the first. This second scene would depict a black officer leading white troops into battle, or at least something along those lines. Both the ideology of social impartiality and the historical reality of the time would be presented. Both dioramas would have been carefully researched as to their historical accuracy.

In the case of the Chinese offer, more sophisticated diplomacy would have to be employed. Possible the Institution would have sent the Chinese a polite refusal, ostensibly based on reasons other than political, but would simultaneously invite a visiting exhibit from China to come to the Institution's Washington museums. That way the contact between the two nations is achieved, but the United States has not accepted anything permanent, and thus is in no way indebted, to Red China. Everyone is pleased, although no one may be particularly overjoyed.

The administrative structuring of the Smithsonian is not 100% efficient in eradicating prejudices of this nature from the content of the Institution's communication. However, particularly in situations like the examples which we have considered, it (the structuring) does seem to promote objectivity. It may have been totally unplanned as an anti-bias mechanism, but it is certainly co-incidentally useful in that regard.

In this section, we have considered the effects of the relationship between the Smithsonian Institution and the United

States Congress. Let us now examine the relationship between the Smithsonian Institution and its public.

Interaction of Media and Community

The Smithsonian sees its involvement with the community in the following light:

> We have a local, a regional, and a national constituency. We are a national museum. It is our duty to serve the nation, and by extension, the world. That may sound pretentious, but the nation and the world come to us and demand to be served, and it is our function to do that.[28]

What this statement says, in effect, is that the Smithsonian Institution attempts to serve a global audience. To do so would be an undertaking of stupendous dimensions. The Smithsonian maintains, apparently, that however gargantuan the task, they are able to meet this global need.

A quick look at the listings on pages 27-30 of this study will reveal the remarkable diversity and scope of the Institution's concerns. Certainly, it appears as if the Smithsonian may indeed have a finger in many a pie. But is "many a pie" equal to "every pie"?

Although at first glance this may seem a small detail, I believe that this controversy over a seemingly minor matter clearly illustrates one of the major points of this pa-

per. The type of information which the imposition of a communicational context upon an issue may yield, as opposed to the pursuance of more traditional modes of inquiry. Let me better present my point by application.

First, consider the matter along the lines of standard academic research. The Smithsonian claims to serve the world. An investigation of the Smithsonian reveals that it does, in fact, maintain myriad culture and research centres in representative parts of the globe. Hence, one would assume the Smithsonian claim to be true-- it adequately services the world.

Now, let us consider the problem from a communicational point of view. The Smithsonian claims to serve the world. The Smithsonian is a communications organization, so its service must be communicational in nature. Communication, by definition, deals with a sender, a receiver, a message and a medium. Although the specifics vary slightly from model to model, "communication" also deals with various forms of "noise"-- something like radio static. Obviously, in order for any message to be received, it must pass from the source, through the "noise", and to the receiver without any significant degree of distortion. Less obvious, however, is the fact that in order for a message to be transmitted accurately, the source must speak to the receiver in a way which can be understood by both parties. ("Translation", as from one language to another is efficient at getting the message across, but can nev-

er be really "pure" according to strict communicational rules. Even within the same tongue, the old folk saying "two people can never really be talking about the same thing" may prove correct!)

Focusing for a moment on the role of the source in our communicational model, we see that implicit in the formula for efficient message-sending is the assumption that the sender can transmit in such a way that the receiver can understand, either directly or through some agent. The Smithsonian says that it serves the world. Implicit in this statement is the assumption that the Smithsonian knows what the world wants.

But the Smithsonian consists, like any national organization, of people who all belong more or less to one culture. While there may be individual differences among them in terms of ideology, education, and personal background, nonetheless they all belong to the same huge club of Western-culture personalities. They have all been socialized into the same culture. They have all assimilated the same basic frameworks, speaking in an anthropological sense, for regarding existance. In other words, they all share the same deep, fundamental, unconscious world-view. The world-view of Western civilization is not necessarily the world-view of the globe. Perspectives on life, deeply-rooted assumptions concerning the nature of God and time, implicit cultural notions about the role of man in nature, all of these things are different in different cultures. The Smithsonian may believe that it "serves" the world comp-

rehensively, but it is not possible for any institution of similar nature of the Smithsonian to do so. How can the Smithsonian fill a need it has no way of comprehending?

The criticism, actually, is slight, but the implications are clear. Through the technique of communicational-oriented analysis, we see that the relationship of the Smithsonian to its audience is less glowing, and is in fact more vaguely defined, than the Smithsonian itself believes. We have looked at the form. Now let us consider the content.

II. CONTENT

"Content" is the message which one sends through the media. Traditional thought regarding the museum as an institution has assigned the exhibit the role of the media, and what is included in the exhibit the role of the message. In this section I would like to challenge that concept. I propose the concept of the museum itself being the medium, and the contents of that museum - the exhibits - being the messages. I base this proposal on my study of the Smithsonian Institution.

Let me explain why I feel this necessary adjustment of

the communicational position of the terms involved. We have already seen how the structuring of the Smithsonian's administration and how the financial situation of the Institution help to discourage political bias within the Smithsonian's content. But what about the cultural nature of that content? However, in the previous section, we realized that the world-view inherent in the Smithsonian's personnel could not help but affect the relationship of the Institution with its audience.

Bearing this in mind, also recall that the Smithsonian is in the business of presenting structured bits of information to the public. Is it possible for any presentation to rise above the socialization of the people behind it? The answer, of course, is no. Here the Smithsonian is like any other media in the world. It is virtually impossible to present a message of any sort without also presenting, however implicitly, the framework of cultural thought which surrounds that message. (note: this idea is the whole basis for semiotics and semiology)

But note: the level on which this process takes place is the level of the museum. The museum composes its messages through the selection and arrangement of its exhibits. Certainly it is possible for the exhibits themselves to contain or to juxtapose articles and elements in a suggestive manner, but it is nonetheless the presence of the exhibit within the museum which is of greater overall significance. I give two examples.

Case 1 - Consider the Moon Landing exhibit in the National Air and Space Museum. The reconstruction of the landing includes the original lunar module. In one were to consider the exhibit as the medium, then the module would be the message. Look at the lunar module. It is a confusing conglomerate of metal and glass. It looks appropriately mechanically esoteric. It also looks surprisingly fragile. What can be learned from considering the lunar module as the message? A point, perhaps, could be made concerning the skill of man in creating this sophisticated machinery, but that is about all.

Case 2 - Now consider the exhibit of the Moon Landing as the message within the medium of the Smithsonian Institution. The view widens enormously. Not only is all of the information in case 1 apparent, but additional facts can be drawn from the very existance of this exhibit in a Washington, D.C. museum. A tabulation would go something like this:

1. The Americans made it to the moon first.
2. This (the module) is what they had to achieve to do so.
3. This is what they had to challenge (the exhibit backdrop of unappetizing outer space).
4. In order to do this thing, their entire culture must be oriented towards technology and scientific research.
5. Why would they want to do this? They must be a restless, ambitious, energetic people.
6. They are obviously proud of both (4) and (5),

since they are showing off their supreme mechanical accomplishment along these lines in their nation's capital.

Clearly, it is much more illuminating to consider the museum the form of media, and the exhibit the message. To adopt the position that the exhibit is the form of media, and the objects within the exhibit as the message, is similar to trying to gain linguistic comprehension of a given culture's language through the study of phonology alone, with never a thought to morphology, syntax, and grammar.

At the present time, the art of museum as media is only just coming into its own. Upon consideration of the gigantic strides which institutions such as the Smithsonian seem to be making towards developing the museum as a new, three-dimensional form of media, it seems that it will not be long before the entire field opens up to the scrutiny of media students. When it does, I sincerely hope that it is the museum rather than the exhibit which is considered as the medium. In communicational studies, the importance of context can never be emphasized enough.

PART III: Comments, Comparisons, and Questions Further Raised.

In this section I would like to offer some possibilities for the future development of media organizations. These suggestions are based on the observations which I made during the field research for this study. I would also like to discuss various features of the Smithsonian and of the Post, the ways in which they are similar, and the ways in which they are different.

First, let us consider the differences between the Post and the Smithsonian, as described by the results of my interviewing.

The most surprising difference to me is the totally unlike positions of Smithsonian Magazine and the Post's Weekend magazine, in regard to their respective parent organizations. Although my research on the Smithsonian had informed me that the magazine enjoyed a staff completely divorced from the administration of the museum proper, I still entertained lingering images of the publication as more or less "under the thumb" of the all-encompassing Smithsonian hand. I felt that, even though the magazine was termed "autonomous", it still had to feel a great deal of pressure from Smithsonian officials to provide free publicity about the museum's exhibits and activities.

In an interview with Edwards Park, a columnist and editorial board member of Smithsonian magazine for many years, I discovered that I could not have been more mistaken.

According to Mr. Park, the higher-ups in the Smithsonian Institution are quite indifferent to the general workings of the magazine. It appears that, rather than continuously shuttling force-fed information as I had imagined, the Smithsonian's curators often neglect to even notify the magazine of the goings-on at their museums. Instead of being just a high-quality house organ, Smithsonian magazine is truly autonomous. It does have a separate staff and budget, it does publish largely free-lance material which is "of the same type of thing which would be of interest to the Smithsonian", and it even operates financially in the black (as of late).

This is a very different situation than that of Weekend magazine. Weekend also has a staff and a budget of its own, but responsibility for its printed matter goes up through the Weekend editor and rests, ultimately, with the editor of the Post. The publication is run separately from the Post, with regards to staffing, editing and production, but Weekend is much more a part of the Washington Post than Smithsonian is part of the Institution.

The other major difference which I noted between the Smithsonian and the Post is the attitude of the organizations towards the possibility of some type of bias or prejudice creeping into the content of their work. During the course

of my interview with the Post, the public relations officer brought up the subject of her own accord, opening the topic with "this is something that I think you should know." She then proceeded to explain to me the various mechanisms which the Post employs to counteract the possibilities of bias and false reporting (note: these mechanisms are discussed in the first section of this paper).

Apparently, the Post is very conscious of the dangers of bias. Whether or not their safety measures are, in fact, significantly corrective is a debatable issue. The crucial point here is that they are fully aware of the problem, and are taking conscious steps to deal with it.

This is not necessarily the case with the Smithsonian. As is discussed elsewhere in this paper, there are methods by which the tendencies towards bias in the Smithsonian may be neutralized. However, these methods exist mainly by happenstance and good fortune. The Institution's Public Affairs Officer, in interview, made the statement that often what is developed into an elaborate exhibit at the Institution began as some curator's pet interest.[29]

Yet, when I asked this officer about the degree of cultural, intellectual, or personal bias which may or may not exist in the Smithsonian's selection process, he could not even comprehend the question. That is because the Smithsonian itself considers the possibility itself as out of the question. And that is because the Smithsonian does not yet

think of itself in terms of a media organization. For the Smithsonian to consider itself in the light of a media organization is the first step towards the Institution's being able to solve the problems attendant on the situation.

These were the two major differences which I found between the Smithsonian and the Washington Post. Next I will describe the similarities between the two organizations, and then I will discuss the ways in which cognizance of these differences and similarities may be used to benefit the future construction of media forms. First, let us discuss the similarities involved.

A study of the Smithsonian as a media organization, as compared to a study of a newspaper such as the Washington Post clearly reveals a single fact about the public, a fact which holds true in the situation of either organization. This fact is that the public seems to have a burning desire to organize its environment.

What the Post and the Smithsonian unexpectedly have in common is a shared societal function. Both organizations, obviously, deal in the distribution of information to the public. Equally obvious, the types of information which they distribute are of very dissimilar natures. However, what is surprising is the public's attitude towards the act of this distribution.

In both cases, the primary demand which the public (the audience or the receiver, in communications terms) places up-

on the form of media is the tidy organization of the information which is to be presented. The newspaper organizes (and often analyzes) the events of the day, the present world. The museum organizes the news, the events, of yesterday, also often commenting on them in a very non-objective fashion (e.g. the Civil War exhibit discussed earlier), and sometimes presents hints about the ways in which the future world may be arranged. This tendency towards categorization is dangerous on the part of both types of media.

Let me give some examples. The Washington Post, as a newspaper, has the function of reporting to the public both the world-wide and the local events of the day. As the world is very active, this is often an enormous and sometimes unrealistic task. In order to meet this demand, the paper must decide exactly what sort of event a bit of news is, in order to know what page to place the story on. This categorization process on the part of the newspaper is inevitable; to deal with as immense a topic as the day's news, one must break the information down into smaller, more easily-handled segments (stories). But the breakdown and categorization often results in a single event being separated from its context. An example of this was the Iranian civil disturbance. American newspapers treated the issue as primarily being religious conflict, when in actuality, the problems were deeply civil, political, and economic as well.

For further clarification, consider the example in this

light. Civil unrest breaks out in Iran. Oil reserves are destroyed. Does the United States (or the Canadian) newspaper print its coverage of the event in the section labelled "Foreign Affairs" or in the section labelled "Business News." The two sections would really be dealing with different ramifications of the identical subject matter. But the student reading the headline "Religious War Rocks Iran" will have a totally different picture of the situation than will the businessman who reads the story captioned "U.S. Loses Iranian Oil - Canadian Pipeline Stock Skyrockets." Nonetheless, both the student and the businessman will feel satisfactorily well-informed about the event, since the paper obligingly presented them with the information according to the category which each reader found more relevant to their respective needs. (note: this principle takes into account, obviously, the well-known media fact that very few people read a newspaper all the way through.) A newspaper which attempted to break free of the categorization process by presenting all sides and all ramifications of all events would fail miserably, because no reader would want to take the time to wade through its massive bulk. People use newspapers because they are structured in such a way that a reader can "flip through", quickly finding the categorizations of news which most directly affect his or her life. People do not want unstructured information from their newspaper; they want highly organized coverage.

The Smithsonian, too, presents highly organized coverage, even though it may be of a different type of event than "news". The museum has just as much material to deal with as does the newspaper, if not more. The museum has the task of presenting the past. It has all of history to deal with.

For an individual to contemplate on his or her past life is often a confusing, muddling task. For a nation to attempt to do so is a mammoth undertaking, and an experience every bit as confused and muddled as an individual's introspection. In order to carry out the job, a museum such as the Smithsonian must confront a bewildering array of historical, cultural, military, political and technological data. It must decide what facts and events, out of that data, are the most crucial or the most interesting to its various publics, and it must arrange and present those facts in a fashion that educates and entertains those publics.

All of this requires, above all else, organization. The Smithsonian must articulate our national heritage to the public, and in order to do so, it must possess a precise and comprehensive command of the cultural language.

When a reader opens a newspaper, all of the categorizational decisions have already been made for him. By the time the reader receives his paper, the editors will have decided for him what angles a single event, such as Iranian unrest, can be considered from. The reader will come across the Iranian information in due course, and will absorb the categori-

zation along with the news material itself. In much the same way, by the time a visitor walks into a Smithsonian building, the decisions have already been made. He sees a rather scanty exhibit on underwater exploration; on the other hand, he spends three days wandering in the Air and Space Museum. It comes home to him, without his actually noticing, that space exploration is vastly more important to the United States than is underwater exploration. The cultural assumption has been made for him, and is passed on, implicitly through the two presentations.

If the visitor happened to recognize this assumption, he would probably be more likely to experience a faint sensation of relief at the Smithsonian's having done the evaluation for him, rather than challenge the Institution's right to do so. Someone has to set criteria, and what does he, the average layman, really know about the relative merits of space engineering as opposed to underwater technology.

The Smithsonian also remarks on the present and the future by its comments about the past. It does this by setting cultural and aesthetic standards of excellence. Just because a visitor walks through a set of doors under a plaque saying "National Gallery of Art" over them, that visitor is excruciatingly aware that he or she is now in the presence of ART. A painting which has been accepted for display by a Smithsonian gallery is automatically made a "better" painting than it was. Here again, it is the Smithsonian's categorization which

is apparently more important to the public than the actual contents of the exhibit itself. An average visitor may not personally like a Smithsonian painting, but he will never dismiss it as sheer rubbish. After all, he's no professional art critic, and if it's hanging in the Smithsonian, then it must somehow be "good".

This dependancy of the public on the categorization processes of the media organization is obviously a very dangerous thing. It is too easy for an evaluating bias to creep into even the simplest of information transmission.

Both the Post and the Smithsonian are aware of this. Both take steps to try to remedy the situation. The Post, as noted, has developed an intricate system of self-censorship, based on its use of an ombudsman, and its unusually high reporter/editor ratio. The Smithsonian, even though autonomous in its executive administration, is still embroiled in a constant struggle with Congress for funding. This tension, together with a dedication to historical accuracy at the Smithsonian, leads to as objective and as thoroughly-researched exhibits as is possible. Nonetheless, neither institution can escape the problems inherent in the nature of a media organization. Neither institution can compose its contents in a fashion that will be totally free of its form. Neither institution can be more than it is designed to be, nor can be more than it thinks of itself as. After long research, I am convinced that both the Post and the Smithsonian are excel-

lent and conscientious examples of the different forms of media which they represent. But there is still something missing. There is still something in the basic design of the organizations which makes it all too easy for serious categorical assumptions, and equally serious evaluatory comments, to be made by the institution to the public, without the public's awareness of the fact. In my opinion, there are two things missing. One is a more balanced organizational design of access. The other is an aroused public participation. To further clarify these two ideas, let us now proceed to the next, and final, section of this paper.

Suggestions and Conclusions

At present, the problem of prejudice at the Smithsonian is not at all of a signifi ant magnitude. Nor, it appears from the continued good reputation of the paper, is it a serious problem for the Washington Post. However, the potential for more dangerous complication along the lines of bias is strongly present in the sheer operational design of both institutions.

During the course of this study we have seen how two seemingly unlike structures actually have more fundamental things in common than it would first appear. Perhaps we could use our knowledge of these skeletal-level workings to evolve

a more idealistic form of media than either one of the prototypes.

One of the Smithsonian's problems, even though the problem has its benefits, is that it is funded by a source outside of its executive administration. One of the Smithsonian's strengths is that it has the time and the means to thoroughly research any communication which it may present. One of the Post's problems is that it must present the public with a massive amount of information in a form which that public must be able to quickly swallow and digest, before a new batch of information comes along. One of the Post's great strengths is that it is thoroughly accessible to the public; one need only pay fifteen cents.

Perhaps there is a way to combine these various strengths and weaknesses of the two institutions into a plan for a new, more efficient, more comprehensive media organization.

Let me propose the following construction for a new form of media.

It would be an institution, predictably, not unlike a cross between the Smithsonian Institution and the Washington Post. It would produce, first of all, two daily news sheets (three on Sunday). One sheet would be on the stands in the morning of each day; the other would be available in the evening. The morning sheet would be a quick tally of "hard" news, something designed expressly for the purpose of being skimmed over. The second sheet would not be available until

evening because it would take extra time to write and research. The second sheet would be comprised of something akin to the "feature article" of the present. Its appearance during the evening hours would nicely co-incide with people getting off work and having enough time to really read it through.

However, there is a more important reason for breaking down the news into quick-fact sheets and feature-article sheets than sheer timing. The evening sheets would contain all of the analysis currently present in what masquerades as hard-fact news. For example, in our case of what to do with the disturbances in Iran, the morning sheet would carry the only heading "Unrest Strikes Iran", and the evening sheet would carry both of the headings "Religious Conflict" and "Canadian Pipeline Stock Skyrockets." If the newspaper system were altered to this fashion of presenting the day's events, it would be much easier for the public to discern exactly where the categorization process enters the scene.

There is also another reason for the pause before the presentation of the in-depth news. In this new media design, the newspaper section of the organization would be working in conjunction with a "contextual-accuracy" department. This department would be organized much along the lines of the Smithsonian, and would be responsible for investigating the context of each reporter's feature news. The contextual department would have access to a storehouse of cultural, pol-

itical and historical information, and would utilize this knowledge to make certain that each bit of information in the evening news sheet was presented in its most objective context.

Each department, news and contextual accuracy, would have their own separate ombudsman, to police the workings within the department. Imperative to the success of this concept would be the establishment of different executive-power sources, and of separate financial sources, for each department.

An organization structured along these lines would have the advantages of the efficient administration and easy public access of the Post, and the incredible resources that the accumulated informational wealth of the Smithsonian would contribute. Taken overall, the organization could be loosely described as an "informational human resources centre."

All of this, of course, is unlikely to develop at the present moment. However, it is a plan which is based on a careful study of two of the United States' most successful existing media organizations. If a method of successfully blending the qualities of each, as I have herein proposed, could in fact be developed, the chances of a new and decidedly improved form of media organization being established are very good indeed.

This brings me to the second point of this section, and the final point of the paper. So far, a good deal of the

commenting and suggesting has been in the abstract, in the future. There are measures which can be taken now to improve the quality and the responsibility of the present-day media.

That we are reaching a crisis point in the development of communication technology is undeniable. That the fundamental structures of most forms of media organization -- traditional forms and non-traditional forms --are in need of serious modification is also undeniable. But of crucial importance to any real improvement in the relationship between media organization and audience is the energy and the commitment of the audience itself. Mere change in the structural design of media is not sufficient. The audience, too, must change. It must rouse itself, and shift from being a consumer audience to being a participatory audience. Nor is it enough to consider an audience as "participatory" merely because it is critical. The audience of the media organization must be willing to work in a constructive as well as a declamatory fashion in order to reach a more balanced position with the media. On the most simplistic level, this means that individual members of that audience must be willing to go to media organizations with ideas and suggestions as well as with criticisms, and those individuals must further be willing to organize into lobbies and other forms of pressure groups, when mere diplomatic tactics receive no positive reply. The audience must be willing to work for, work with, and occasionally work against its media organizations.

In this paper, we have studied the merits and the faults of two widely divergent forms of media. In our examination of the Washington Post and the Smithsonian Institution, in our comparisons of their similar and dissimilar traits, in our investigation into their different relationships with their respective audiences, one conclusion at least has come clear. Until the audience-at-large develops this new self-image, this new sense of its own active importance in its own media environment, any structural change on the part of the media organization will be not only superficial, it will also be short-lived.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of the people who encouraged me, aided me, and occasionally kicked me back into motion during the writing of this paper. Those people are: Virginia Rodrigues of the Washington Post, John Jameson, Edwards Park, and particularly Alvin Rosenfeld of the Smithsonian Institution, and David Crowley of McGill University. In particular I would like to thank friend, comforter, and proofreader Kathleen Kearns, for her invaluable assistance in correcting my misspelled version of "development" at least twenty-five times, for making me see the true meaning of parallel structure, and for listening to continuous explanations of social responsibility over the dinner table.

The writing of this paper would not have been possible without the most generous gift of time and interest by all of the persons named above. In all sincerity (and in all relief at completion), I thank them.

I would also like to thank the incomparable typist, S. Peter Loshin, for morning coffee and fifty-five cents per page.

Lisa St. Clair Harvey
Montreal 1979

FOOTNOTES

[1] "Media organization", "communications network", and "communications organization" are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

[2] Realistic in terms of dealing with the operating commercial world.

[3] Jimmy Carter made the offer to the Chinese Vice-Chairman on the V.C.'s recent visit to Washington. Reference: ABC and NBC Nightly News, January 30, 1979.

[4] Taken in lecture, David Crowley, "Critical Approaches to Communications Study", December 1978.

[5] Innis, Harold. The Bias of Communications. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951.

[6] Rivers, William L. The Opinionmakers. USA: Beacon Press, 1965.

[7] McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

[8] Wagner, Geoffrey. "Misunderstanding Media: Obscurity As Authority." From: McLuhan: Pro and Con, ed. Raymond Rosenthal. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1969.

[9] Hoch, Paul. The Newspaper Game. London: Colder and Boyars, 1974.

[10] Tunstall, Jeremy. The Manufacture of News. Great Britain: Sage Publications, 1973.

[11] Brucker, Herbert. Communication Is Power. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

[12] Minor, Dale. The Information War. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1970.

[13] Krieghbaum, Hillier. Pressures on the Press. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972.

[14] Brucker, Herbert. Communication Is Power. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

[15] Terms from David Crowley, in lecture, December 1978.

[16] As outlined in the undergraduate Communications course at McGill University.

[17] Peterson, Theodore. "The Social Responsibility of the Press". From Four Theories of the Press. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971.

[18] As a manner of speech.

[19] As a manner of speech.

[20] "Mystification" in the Bartian sense of the word.

[21] Tunstall, Jeremy. Journalists at Work. London: Sage Publications, 1971.

[22] This "alteration" which I refer to is not necessarily intentional and malevolent.

[23] "If you focus your attention on one subject more than another ... you don't get away with that for too long. There are people out there who are going to catch that, and your circulation will drop off, and then you'll lose your advertising, and the whole thing will fall apart." from Washington Post interview with Virginia Rodrigues, December, 1978.

[24] Office of Public Affairs. Increase and Diffusion. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1973.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] All quotations in this section are taken from the source cited in footnote #24.

[28] Meaning: Serving the same general function as a "focus" would, but being less restrictive in its application to the context.

[29] Alvin Rosenfeld, in interview, January 1979.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnouw, Erik. Mass Communication - television, radio, film, press; the media and their practice in the United States of America. New York: 1956.

Barthes, Roland. Elements of Semiology. translated from the French by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. London: Cape, 1967.

Barthes, Roland. Critical Essays. translated by Richard Howard. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972.

Barthes, Roland. Mythologies. St. Albans, England: Paladin, 1973.

Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Brucker, Herbert. Communication is Power. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Burke, Kenneth. A Rhetoric of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Burke, Kenneth. The Philosophy of Literary Form; studies in symbolic action. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univer-

sity Press, 1941.

Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1945.

Floherty, J.J. Your Daily Paper. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1938.

Hoch, Paul. The Newspaper Game. London: Calder and Boyars, 1974.

Innis, Harold Adams. Empire and Communications. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Innis, Harold. The Bias of Communication. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951.

Jacobs, Norman. Culture for the Millions: Mass Media in Modern Society. Princeton:1961.

Jones, Robert William. Journalism in the United States. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1947.

Krieghbaum, Hillier. Pressures on the Press. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972.

Lee, Alfred McClung. The Daily Newspaper in America; the evolution of a social instrument. New York: The Macmillian Co., 1937.

McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. The Medium is the Massage. New York: Random House, 1967.

McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man. University of Toronto: 1962.

Minor, Dale. The Information War. New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1970.

Mott, F.L. American Journalism; a History of newspapers in the United States through 250 years, 1690 to 1940. New York: Macmillian Co., 1941.

Office of Public Affairs, Smithsonian Institution. Increase and Diffusion: An Introduction. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975.

Statement by the Secretary, Smithsonian Institution. Smithsonian Year 1977. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978.

Stearn, Gerald Emanuel. McLuhan, hot and cool: a primer for the understanding of and a critical symposium with a rebuttal by McLuhan. New York: Dial Press, 1967.

Tunstall, Jeremy. Journalists at Work. California: Sage Publications, 1974.

Tunstall, Jeremy. The Manufacture of News: A Reader. Great Britain: Sage Publications, 1973.

United States Senate. Audit Review of the Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C., 1977.

Wagner, Geoffrey. "Misunderstanding Media" from McLuhan: Pro and Con. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1969.

Williams, Raymond. Communications. London: Chatto and Windus, 1966.

Williams, Raymond. Culture and Society, 1780 - 1950. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Office of Public Affairs, Smithsonian Institution. Smithsonian Sampler:Press Clippings of Major Activities of the Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1978.

Peterson, Theodore. "The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press" from Four Theories of the Press. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971.

Reid, Whitelaw. American and English Studies. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Rivers, William L. The Opinionmakers. USA: Beacon Press, 1965.

Rosenthal, Raymond B. McLuhan: Pro and Con. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968.

Rosten, Leo Calvin. The Social Composition of Washington Correspondents. Urbana, Illinois: 1937.

Salmon, Lucy Maynard. The Newspaper and the Historian. New York: Oxford University Press, 1923.

Schramm, William Lang. Mass Communications. Urbana, University of Illinois: 1949.

Williams, Raymond. Television: technology and cultural form. London: Fontana, 1974.

Williams, Raymond. Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Modules: (McGill University, Department of English)

Introduction to Communication Studies. Crowley, David.

Communication Theory I. Crowley, David.

Communication Theory II. Crowley, David.

Communication Theory III. Crowley, David; McHugh, Alexandra.